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AN

ILLUSTRATION

James . . OF Kemper's Sen.

THE CHARACTER & CONDUCT

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN

VIRGINIA.

BY JOHN H. RICE.

The World knoweth us not—1 JOHN, III, 1.

RICHMOND:
PRINTED BY DU-VAL & BURKE.
1816.

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To the Honourable the Speaker, and the Members of the House of Delegates of Virginia, the Constitutional Guardians of the Rights and Privileges of the Citizens, this little work is most respectfully inscribed by the

AUTHOR.

Richmond, 6th January, 1816.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

A perusal of the following publication will make the design of it apparent. It may not be improper, however, to show, in the beginning, that this pamphlet has not been produced by a mere itch of scribbling, nor by a desire to obtrude on the notice of the public, without sufficient reason, the claims and pretensions of a religious society.

It is, by this time, pretty generally known that a petition has been presented to the Legislature of this State, praying for the incorporation of a board of trustees for the management of a Theo-

The reader will be pleased to correct the following Errata.

Page 5, line 6 from the bottom, for *slightly* read *lightly*.
17, in the quotation from Virgil, for *arma* read *arva*.
38, last sentence in 2d par'g'h, erase *that*, so as to read *And in the year* 1805, &c.
42, line 28, for *pleasure*, at the end of the line, read *credit*.
45, line 3, immediately after *men of talents*, insert *and learning*.
48, line 32 instead of *construction to*, read construction *of*.
do. line 7 from bottom, between *from* and *memorials* insert *their*.
49, line 17 from the bottom, before *school of law* insert *a*.
54, line 10 from the bottom, for *case* read *cause*.

has been taken against it, is that it has a *squinting towards an establishment*. Hence it has been inferred, and surely as illogically as a conclusion ever was drawn, that the Presbyterian Society is favourable to that odious and unjust measure.

We do most strenuously deny the truth of the premises, and maintain that there is really and truly no more connection between the two things that have thus been joined together, than between the incorporation of a turnpike road and an establishment. It is utterly unfair then to condemn us without proof or the shadow of proof, of (what we think a heinous crime) a dark design against the religious liberties of our native State, covered under the veil of an incorporation of a Theological Seminary. We think that such charges ought not to be made lightly, nor without the best evidence. And we here publickly call on gentlemen who have made them to come forward, and produce this evidence.

And here we might safely let the matter rest, confident as we are that not a tittle of proof can be brought forward. But we are not willing to stop here; we are prepared to show that the evi-

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It is, by this time, pretty generally known that a petition has been presented to the Legislature of this State, praying for the incorporation of a board of trustees for the management of a Theological seminary established by the synod of Virginia. This petition has, very unexpectedly, excited a strong sensation, & has been the subject of much conversation. Many remarks have been made in reference to it, which most abundantly prove that the principles of the presbyterian church are entirely misunderstood; and many insinuations have been thrown out, which, as far as they gain credit, must operate to the injury of that society. The Author believed that he had the right, and that it was his duty, as a member of the committee appointed to present the petition, to give such a statement of facts, as would repel these insinuations, and, at least, be calculated to silence all unfriendly remarks. Knowing the candid and liberal, and manly spirit of Virginians, he hopes for a patient and careful investigation of this subject; nor will any thing but actual experience convince him that he entertains this hope in vain.

The great objection to the petition, the strong point which has been taken against it, is that it has a *squinting towards an establishment.* Hence it has been inferred, and surely as illogically as a conclusion ever was drawn, that the Presbyterian Society is favourable to that odious and unjust measure.

We do most strenuously deny the truth of the premises, and maintain that there is really and truly no more connection between the two things that have thus been joined together, than between the incorporation of a turnpike road and an establishment. It is utterly unfair then to condemn us without proof or the shadow of proof, of (what we think a heinous crime) a dark design against the religious liberties of our native State, covered under the veil of an incorporation of a Theological Seminary. We think that such charges ought not to be made lightly, nor without the best evidence. And we here publickly call on gentlemen who have made them to come forward, and produce this evidence.

And here we might safely let the matter rest, confident as we are that not a tittle of proof can be brought forward. But we are not willing to stop here; we are prepared to show that the evi-

dence lies all on the other side, and to produce abundant proof that the Presbyterians of this country now are, and always have been true and unshaken friends both of political and religious freedom.

The author only asks of the public a fair and candid hearing. Let a judgment be formed of the Society whose system is here exhibited, *upon the evidence*, and no doubt is entertained as to the result.

1. *Of the limits of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.*

In some parts of Virginia, very little is known of the Presbyterian Church. The Author has thought it advisable, therefore, to give a very brief account of the extent and present state of that Society.

By official returns made in the year 1814, it appears that there are in the Presbyterian Church in the United States 503 Ministers, and 887 congregations. To these numbers some addition ought to be made on account of a small deficiency in the official returns from Virginia and South Carolina. If we state the number of Clergymen at 550* and the Congregations at 960, we shall come very near the truth.

This church extends from the state of New York on the north, through all the states to the south and west; Louisiana excepted.

There is, indeed, a small presbytery of our connection in New England, called the presbytery of Londonderry. It consists only of 12 ministers, and 12 congregations; and forms an exception to the above statement too trifling to be noticed.

And here it may be well, as but few have paid much attention to the ecclesiastical state of the country, to mention that the great body of Christians in New England, is known by the distinctive name of *Congregationalists*. This will appear by reference to any history of New England, or to Morse's Geography, which is considered of sufficient authority in such cases. Under the head "United States," and section marked "Religion," we find these words:

"The following are the denominations of Christians: *Con-*
"*gregationalists*, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Friends, Metho-
"dists, Baptists, German Lutherans, Dutch Reformed, Roman
"Catholics, Moravians, &c. The *Congregationalists* are the most
"numerous denomination. There are about one thousand con-
"gregations of this denomination in New England, besides a
"considerable number scattered through the middle and southern
"States. Their whole number is, probably, not less than twelve
"hundred, and nearly an equal number of ministers, and candi-
"dates."

"After them the Presbyterians are most numerous. They
"have a Constitution, and a Confession of Faith," &c. [See vol. 1. p. 189, edit. 1812.]

*This statement excludes the *Seceders*, and the *Dutch Reformed*, who are not of our communion.

Here we see a plain distinction made by a *New England writer*, between Presbyterians, and the denomination of Christians chiefly prevailing in that section of the United States.

If any one wishes to know what is the precise difference between the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches, he is referred to Buck's Theological Dictionary, or Hannah Adams' View of Religions, or Rapin's History of England, Book XXI, or to Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Cent. 17, Art. Reformed Church. Here it is just remarked that the Congregationalists maintain, that all church power and authority is vested *in the Congregation*; so that every individual society is independent of all other societies—Hence they utterly deny authority to Presbyteries, Synods, and Councils.

This statement is given, among other purposes, for the sake of furnishing an answer to a question which perhaps some will be ready to ask, namely, "Why has not the Author illustrated the character and conduct of the Presbyterians, by examples taken from the New England Churches? The reason is most obvious, because they are not Presbyterian.

II. *Of the Ecclesiastical Polity of the Presbyterians.*

It is not the Author's intention, nor is it necessary to his purpose to write a dissertation on ecclesiastical polity. His wish is simply this, that the public should know what principles the presbyterian society have adopted in relation to this very interesting subject. To this end, some extracts will be made from a book very little known in various parts of Virginia, the title of which is, "*The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.*"

Previously, however, it may be observed that we take it for granted, as an indisputable truth, that a system of religion, which has for its author that God who* "hath made of *one blood* all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth," can contain nothing contrary to the liberties, and happiness of the human race. And, although the gospel does not directly, and in express terms, interfere with the constitution and frame of civil governments, yet it lays down principles, which when rightly understood, and reduced to practice, establish the freedom and secure the welfare of man on the firmest basis.

The book which has been mentioned, contains, in the former part the doctrines and catechisms of the Church; in the latter, the Constitution, or form of government, and the Directory for worship.

To the constitution is prefixed an Introduction, in which are laid down the "general principles" on which the form of government is founded. This may be considered as our *Declaration of*

*Acts, Chap. XVIII. v. 26.

Rights. The following maxim deserves the serious attention of the reader:

—"That though the character, qualifications, and authority "of church officers, are laid down in the holy scriptures, as well "as the proper method of their investiture and induction; YET "THE ELECTION OF THE PERSONS TO THE EXERCISE OF THIS "AUTHORITY, IN ANY PARTICULAR SOCIETY, IS IN THAT SO-"CIETY." Page 373; art. 6.

It will be perceived that this great principle runs through the whole of the presbyterian system. For example, in designating the officers of the church, the constitution teaches this doctrine; that,

"The ordinary and perpetual officers in the church are bi-"shops or pastors; and the *representatives of the people*, usually "styled, ruling elders, and deacons." P. 377; chap. 2.

These several officers are in the next place described, and their duties pointed out in very explicit terms:

"The pastoral office is the first in the church both for dignity "and usefulness. The person who fills this office, hath, in scrip-"ture, obtained different names expressive of his various duties. "As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed "*bishop*. As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed *pas-"tor*. As he serves Christ in his church, he is termed *minister*. "As it is his duty to be grave, and prudent, and an example "of the flock, and to govern well in the house, and kingdom of "Christ, he is termed *presbyter* or *elder*. As he is the messenger "of God, he is termed *the angel of the church*. As he is sent to "declare the will of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be re-"conciled to God through Christ, he is termed *ambassador*. And "as he dispenses the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances "instituted by Christ, he is termed *steward* of the mysteries of "God." Chap. 3; p. 378, 379.

For the sake of correcting an erroneous opinion, which some have taken up, it may be observed here, that from this extract it is manifest, that presbyterians do *not* reject the truly scriptural office of bishop. On the contrary, they maintain that every minister of the gospel, having "oversight" of a congregation, is truly and properly *a bishop*. They also hold that all ministers, in respect to power, authority, and dignity, are on a perfect equality. In a word, they are strenuous advocates for *parochial*, in contradistinction to, *diocesan* episcopacy. The Author however, does not at all intend to enter on this controversy. The statement is made entirely for the sake of giving information.

The only other remark which will be introduced here is, that although ministers derive their office from Christ, yet they are *elected* to take oversight of their "flocks" *by the people*: and, in conformity to a fundamental principle already laid down, the mode of conducting such elections is prescribed in the constitution.—Chap. 14; p. 403.

To proceed with our extracts. The *only other church officers that are clothed with ecclesiastical power, are termed "ruling elders." These "are properly *the representatives of the people*, "*chosen by them*, for the purpose of exercising government, and "discipline, in conjunction with pastors or ministers." Chap. 4; page 879.

The mode of their election is prescribed. Chap. 12; pages 895, 896.

Having shown what officers are appointed for the government of the Presbyterian Church, it will be proper in the next place to take some little notice of the several judicatories in that society.

It is clearly indispensible that every community should have laws; and that those laws should be executed. Jesus Christ is the only lawgiver acknowledged by this church; and the bible is their only law-book. The principles, and rules laid down in the constitution are to be regarded in no other light than expositions of the laws enacted by the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ. This doctrine allows to the Church but little power. Great care, however, has been taken least that little should be abused. The history of the world shows that it is dangerous to trust men with power of any kind, and especially with that which has been distinguished by the term *spiritual*. When the claim of the clergy to exercise, independent of the people, *and by Divine right*, ecclesiastical authority, is yielded, the people are not far from abject slavery. Accordingly the Presbyterian society, always watchful of its liberties, has taken especial care that in every church judicatory the people should have, by their representatives, at least an equal vote with the clergy; and in some important particulars their influence is superior. As will appear by the following extracts.

That Judicatory which attends to the interests of each particular congregation is termed the *Church Session*; and consists of the Bishop and Elders of that congregation. The Constitution defines its powers, and prescribes its duties; particularly stating that it "is competent to the government of the congregation; and has "power to concert the best measures for promoting its spiritual interests, and to appoint delegates to represent it "in the higher judicatories." See chap. 8 of the Constitution.

The Church session then has the power of calling before it offenders against the rules of the church, and of rebuking, admonishing, excluding, or suspending the guilty as the case may require. The preacher alone, has no such power. This is on the principle that every voluntary association, such as a congregation must be, has the right in itself of prescribing the rules of

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* The office of deacons is recognized in our constitution; but as they have no church power, it is unnecessary to take particular notice of them. Their business is to manage the temporal concerns of the church, and especially to take care of the poor.

admission, or the terms on which any person shall be considered a member. In this judicatory the minister always presides, and gives a casting vote when necessary.

The Judicatory next above the Church Session, is the *Presbytery*. This "consists of all the ministers, and one ruling elder from each congregation within a certain district."

The Presbytery hath cognizance of all things that regard the welfare of particular churches within their bounds, which are not cognizable by the Session. They have also the power of receiving and issuing appeals from the Sessions, of licensing candidates for the Ministry, of ordaining, settling, removing or judging ministers. See chap. 9, p. 386.

The ecclesiastical judicatory next in order is the Synod. "As a presbytery is a convention of bishops and elders in a cer-"tain district; so a synod is a convention of bishops and elders "within a larger district, including several presbyteries." This body is constituted in the same manner with the presbytery; that is, it consists of an equal number of bishops and elders. It is principally a court of appellate jurisdiction; appeals and references being made to it from the several presbyteries. Chap. 10, page 392.

"The General Assembly is the highest judicatory of the presbyterian church"—"and consists of an equal delegation of "bishops and elders from each presbytery" in proportion to its numbers. This assembly attends to the general interests of the presbyterian church in the United States, and receives appeals from all the inferior judicatories. Chap. 11, p. 393.

This detail is given for the purpose of showing how carefully the constitution of the church provides limitations & restraints on clerical power. The people cannot be oppressed, unless by persons of their own choice, in other words by their representatives. The ministers of the gospel can carry into effect no scheme of aggrandizement, unless the people are unwise enough to aid them.

It may be as well to mention here, as in any other place, that this constitution of the church may be amended. The mode however, in which this is effected, gives complete security against any imprudent love of change, and at the same time ensures a remedy for any evil that experience points out. It may suffice to observe farther, that no alteration can take place without at least a year's deliberation; and then by a concurrence of a majority of the presbyteries expressed to the general assembly. Let the reader bear this remark in his memory.

To this synopsis of the constitution of the presbyterian church, it may be well to add an extract or two from the work so often quoted, showing the deliberate and solemn judgment of the church with respect to civil government, its powers in relation to religion, and the duties which christians owe to civil authorities.

The first extract will be given from the 23d chapter, entitled "Of the Civil Magistrate." Page 114.

"God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath "ordained civil magistrates to be under him over the people, for "his own glory and the public good, and to this end, hath armed "them with the power of the sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil-doers.

"II. It is lawful for christians to accept and execute the office "of a magistrate, when called thereunto; in the managing whereof, "as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth; so, for "that end, they may lawfully, now under the New Testament, "wage war upon just and necessary occasions.

"III. Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the word and sacraments; or the power of the "keys of the kingdom of heaven; or, in the least, interfere in "matters of faith. Yet as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil "magistrates to protect the church of our common Lord, without "giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above "the rest in such a manner, that all ecclesiastical persons whatever "shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions without violence or "danger. And, as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in his church, no law of any commonwealth, "should interfere with, let, or hinder, the due exercise thereof, "among the voluntary members of *any* denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the "duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name "of all their people, in such an effectual manner as that no person "be suffered, either upon pretence of religion or infidelity, to offer "any indignity, violence, abuse or injury, to any other person "whatsoever: and to take order, that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance.

"IV. It is the duty of the people to pray for magistrates, "to honour their persons, to pay them tribute and other dues, to "obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, "for conscience' sake. Infidelity or difference in religion, doth "not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority; nor "free the people from their due obedience to him: from which "ecclesiastical persons are not exempted."

Again, reference is made to the general principles laid down in the Introduction to the Constitution, page 371. The attention of the reader is particularly directed to the following words:— "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from "the doctrine and commandments of men, which are in any thing "contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship: "therefore they (the framers of the constitution) consider the rights "of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as *uni-*

"*versal* and *unalienable*; they do not even wish to see any reli-
"gious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be
"necessary for protection and security, and at the same time equal
"and common to all others."

On these extracts it is obvious to remark,

1. That the constitution of the Presbyterian church is fundamentally and decidedly *republican*. And that it is in a very happy manner adapted to that particular modification of republican institutions which prevails in the United States. This is too plain to require proof; the slightest attention being sufficient to convince any one, that our ecclesiastical constitution establishes in the church, a representative government. Hence the more decidedly a man is a presbyterian, the more decidedly is he a republican.—So much is this the case, that some christians of this society fully believing that "*Presbytery is de jure divino*," consider this as decisive evidence that republicanism is of divine institution too; and are verily persuaded that they should grievously sin against God by acknowledging any other form of civil government. This is mentioned for the sake of showing what influence the sentiments, which men hold in relation to the church, have on their political opinions.

But that the proper effects of this ecclesiastical constitution on the human heart and understanding may be perceived and duly appreciated, let us illustrate the subject a little.

The people of this country, by the favour of Providence have been enabled to shake off a foreign yoke; and are blessed with the right of self government. We own the authority of no civil laws, but of those made by our representatives. We pay no taxes but such as, through our representatives, we choose to lay on ourselves. All who are placed in authority over us, are responsible to us. We daily perceive the advantages, and enjoy the blessings of civil liberty. And understanding our political rights, we are determined to maintain them.

Does not every one perceive that, by a common operation of the human mind, the maxims and principles which relate to civil and political liberty, will be extended to every subject in which the rights of man are involved? I am free, the citizen would say, from the arbitrary power of kings and nobles, and I have a right to be free from every species of ecclesiastical tyranny. Every understanding would see, and every heart would feel the analogy to be irresistible. Thus would religious liberty follow in the train of blessings conferred by political and civil freedom. Now let us reverse the case, and suppose a people enjoying their religious liberties, in the plenary degree and manner in which, under the constitution of the presbyterian church in the United States, they are secured to its members; would not the moral effect be the same? Nay is it not likely that it would be greater; inasmuch as religion from its very nature, from the magnitude of the objects with which it is conversant, and the infinite value of the interests which it in-

volves, is calculated to take, and indeed does take a most powerful hold on the human heart. But however this may be, the truth is that civil, political, and religious liberty has been generally not to say universally, united.

There is another fact of which most statesmen do not seem to be aware, that since the era of the reformation, the only period perhaps in history in which the principles of self government have been rightly understood, and fixed on their proper foundation, religious liberty has gone foremost in breaking the chains of oppression, and emancipating the human race. And I have a "*comfortable hope*" that she will carry on to its complete consummation the glorious work which has commenced.*

But further, there is much reason to believe that the founder of *modern* presbyterianism, the illustrious reformer of Geneva, is the person to whom, of all men the world is most indebted for that portion of liberty which is now enjoyed. This may be thought by some to be a mere prejudice in the author deserving no attention; while perhaps others will treat it with perfect scorn. But let the reader carefully study the following facts, and draw his own conclusions.

Let it be premised, however, that it would require a volume to do justice to this subject. And by the way a most interesting volume might be written by a man of talents and learning, and leisure, on the political influence which various religious systems have had in the world.

The following statement, given by the celebrated †Mosheim, whose ecclesiastical history is universally regarded as good authority, will show that the assertion made above is not so destitute of support as some may perhaps be ready to suppose.

"In the year 1541, John Calvin, who surpassed almost all the doctors of this age in laborious application, constancy of mind, force of eloquence, and extent of genius, returned to Geneva, from whence the opposition of his enemies had obliged him to retire.—The views and projects of this great man were grand and extensive. For he not only undertook to give strength and vigour to the rising church, by framing the wisest laws and the most salutary institutions for the maintainance of order and the advancement of true piety, but even proposed to render Geneva, the mother, the seminary of all the reformed churches.———A circumstance that among others, contributed much to the success of his designs, was the establishment of an academy at Geneva, which the senate of that city founded at his request; and in which he himself, and his colleague Theodore Beza, and other divines of eminent learning and abilities taught the sciences with the greatest reputation. In effect, the lustre which these great men reflected on this infant seminary of learning, spread its fame thro'

*See McLeod on the Prophecies. †Mosheim was a Lutheran.

the distant nations with such amazing rapidity, that all, who were ambitious of a distinguished progress in either sacred or profane erudition, repaired to Geneva; and that England, Scotland, France, Italy and Germany, seemed to vie with each other in the numbers of their studious youth, that were incessantly repairing to the new academy." See Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, cent. 16. History Reformed Church, part 2, chap. 2.

The intelligent historian proceeds in the next place to state the alterations made by Calvin in the plan of doctrine and discipline which had before been introduced into the reformed church. Zuingle, in his form of ecclesiastical government, had given an absolute and unbounded power, in religious matters, to the civil magistrate. "Calvin, on the contrary, reduced the power of the magistrate, in religious matters, within narrow bounds. He declared the church a separate and independent body, endowed with the power of legislation for itself. He maintained that it was to be governed, like the primitive church, only by presbyteries and synods, that is by assemblies of elders composed both of the *clergy and laity*; and he left to the civil magistrate little else than the privilege of protecting and defending the church, and providing for what related to its external exigencies and concerns."

After this the historian details the progress made by the doctrines of this great reformer in various countries of Europe. The effect produced by them may be discerned in the history of those countries.

In what were afterwards called the Seven United Provinces, the flame of liberty was soon kindled, and the hardy and patient inhabitants of that country were roused to deeds of heroic valour, which have never been surpassed.

In France there were many scholars from the Genevan school, and every reader of history knows what desperate struggles the Huguenots made for the maintenance of their rights and liberties. Perhaps indeed some may think that the civil wars carried on in France were merely *religious wars*. But this is not true. It was a contest on the one part, for power both spiritual and political, and on the other, for freedom from this tyranny. To this it may be added, that the descendants of the Huguenots, to this day called Calvinists in France, constitute the great body of true republicans in that country: and are the very people that the friends of *legitimate authority*, are destroying with fire and faggot; the very protestants that the deliverers of Europe are permitting to be consumed by slow tortures, or assassinated almost before their eyes.

In Great Britain, every intelligent reader of history knows what were the effects of this system. It shook to the centre, and finally overturned the throne of the *Stuarts.

*They however di not behead the first Charles. The Independents have to bear the blame or enjoy the honour of that.

It is amusing and edifying to attend to the speculations of the writers of that day on the subject now before us. One writer sets himself very seriously to prove that presbyterianism is totally and absolutely inconsistent with monarchical government: another admits that this is going too far; it is not incompatible with monarchy, but it so limits and restrains the king, as to reduce royalty to a mere shadow. An anonymous pamphlet printed in the year 1646 is now lying before me. The reader will probably not be displeased by the following extract. The title of the pamphlet is, "The Burden of Issachar." The writer chooses to express himself in these terms:

"They, (presbyterians) teach and maintain that all sove-
"reignty and majesty in a king is originally, immediately, and
"properly derived from the community, *and that only by way of*
"*fiduciary trust*; so that it is habitually and radically still in
"the people; and the king hath no greater portion, or pro-
"portion than he hath by the first popular fundamental consti-
"tution: and in case of deficiency the collective body may supply
"in church or state the defects of his government. For want of
"a good administration, the king is censurable; for enormous
"errors he is deposable; and they may disinhe- it his posterity;
"that a defensive war is lawful against a bad king, or a weak
"king seduced by malignant counsel."

These were laid as heavy accusations against the presbyterians of former days; and they were stigmatized as rebels and traitors, because they held such maxims. We trust that it will be no discredit to the American presbyterians, that they are the legitimate offspring of these very rebels and traitors. The more I search into history, the more abundant evidence presents itself that it is to the free and independent spirit breathed into his disciples by our great reformer that England is indebted for her revolution, and for whatever freedom she enjoys. The ablest historical writer that Great Britain has produced bears testimony to the correctness of this opinion when he says that "The precious sparks of liberty were kindled and preserved by the puritans in England; and that it is to this sect, whose principles appear so frivolous, and whose habits so ridiculous, *the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution.*"

It is worth while to remark as a further confirmation of the opinion here maintained, that every highflying royalist, from Peter Heylin down to the unknown author of the "Pursuits of Literature" has held the presbyterians in great abhorrence. The words of the last named writer are too remarkable to be passed over in silence. The fourth dialogue commences thus:

Oh for that sabbath's dawn ere Britain wept,
And France before the Cross believed and slept,
* * * * * * *
Ere by his lake Geneva's angel stood,
And waved his scroll prophetic o'er the flood.
With names (as yet unheard) and symbols drear,
CALVIN in front, and Neckar in the rear, &c.

And on these lines he has the following note :

"*It* is remarkable that in Switzerland appeared the three persons whose principles, doctrines, and practice, (*as it seems to me*) have primarily and ultimately effected the great chang and downfall of regal and of all lawful power in Europe. Calvin, in religion : Rousseau, in politics ; and Neckar by his administration. Calvin and his disciples were never frien ls to monarchy * * ; but I shall not here contend politically or theologically with bishop Horsley concerning Calvin. A poet's words are better for a poet. I have looked into history, and as I think, have found them true. Dryden speaks of Calvin thus, and remarkably enough ;

"The last of all the litter 'scap'd by chance,
"And from Geneva first infested France."

But again, it requires but little acquaintance with the early history of our own country to convince one, that it was the disciples of the reformer of Geneva who first settled the far greater part of it. When their cause seemed to be lost in Europe, and the yoke of oppression was too intolerable to be borne, rather than yield to arbitrary power, they left their native land.

Nos patriæ fines, et dulcia liquimus arma,
Nos patriam fugimus.

Such might well have been the language of our pious ancestors, when, bidding farewell to their kindred and the house of their fathers, they went they knew not whither. They came out in poverty and great affliction ; but they brought with them their bibles, and their uncorrupted faith, and their liberty. Dearer to them were the pathless wilds of the desert, with such companions as these ; than all the objects, however dear, that they had left at home. Less dreadful to them were hardships, and poverty, and sickness, and all the terrors of savage war, than subjection of the *conscience* to human authority. And when it pleased God to give them a large place, and a goodly land to dwell in, they did not forget their principles ; neither did their children degenerate. When the time called for it, they showed their spirit. When G. Britain resolved, by her superior strength, to enforce submission to her arbitrary measures, and the time of peril, and of sore trial came, then were the presbyterians among the foremost and most forward. There was no halting between two opinions among *them*. Their ministers were decidedly active and influential ; and became on that account extremely obnoxious to the British. An instance of this lives, and forever will live in the memory of Americans. The writer alludes to the unprecedented butchery of the family of the Rev. Mr. Caldwell of New Jersey, in the year 1780. But it is needless to dwell on facts so completely established, and so well known.

The progress of liberty both civil and religious (it seems to me) may be traced as distinctly from the school of Geneva thro'

various countries down to the present day; as the improvements in modern philosophy can be traced to the Novum Organum, and the other philosophical writings of the immortal Bacon.

But to return to our remarks on the constitution of the presbyterian church, it may be observed,

2. That the best possible assurance is given that there will be no alteration in this form of government unfavorable to the liberties of the people. For, as we have before seen, it requires at least a whole year to make any change. The most expeditious method for effecting any purpose of this kind is the following: The General Assembly, which meets annually, proposes an amendment to the constitution. This is sent down to all the presbyteries, and they are required to decide on the matter proposed, and make report to the General Assembly at its next meeting. It depends on this decision whether the proposed amendment is adopted or rejected. During the whole period mentioned above, the subject is before the people. They have then, a complete opportunity of forming, and expressing their sentiments, and directing the vote of their representatives.

Let us now suppose that measures should be taken to procure the establishment of presbyterianism. We have seen that this is contrary to one of the fundamental principles of the church; and the people know it to be so. A change like this cannot take place without their knowledge, and approbation. Is it likely that they will give their consent; that they will voluntarily bind chains around themselves? Let the reader judge.

Again, suppose that the presbyterians in *Virginia* should become so corrupt as to wish for the establishment by law, of their mode of worship.—We see that they are under the jurisdiction of an assembly, formed by delegation from all the States from New-York to Georgia. In this case, either, the whole church through this great extent of country must be equally corrupt, which is a very improbable supposition; or, the Virginia church would be liable to excommunication for the violation of a fundamental principle of the constitution.

But farther, the church thus constituted, and thus governed, without any legal establishment in any of its branches, depends for all its strength and support, upon the favour of the people.—In this situation, we may safely pronounce it to be morally impossible that such a body of men as the presbyterian clergy should attempt a measure which would be as vain and foolish as it would be wicked. The jealousy, then, entertained on this subject is without the shadow of foundation.

3. Another remark which may be made on the extracts before given, is that the doctrine therein taught concerning the "*civil magistrate*," is not unworthy of a church holding such principles as those which have been exhibited. We acknowledge his authority, and are required, and disposed to give him due honour, to render obedience to all his lawful commands, and to pray for his

prosperity. We do not admit that difference in religion, or the infidelity of the magistrate in the least degree lessens our obligations to pay him all due respect. We do not allow of a factious or rebellious spirit: at the same time, however, we know, and are determined to maintain our rights as freemen.

For the sake of illustrating this part of our character, the Author has determined to publish several memorials, formerly presented to the House of Delegates of Virginia. These papers are written in such a style, as will afford pleasure to every reader; and at the same time the publication of them will give an opportunity of explaining some things that have been much misunderstood by some, and misrepresented by others.

It is necessary however, before we exhibit these papers, to give the reader a premonition, that he may understand the state of affairs during, and immediately subsequent to the revolution; and the feelings and sentiments, which would naturally result from the situation of the country as to ecclesiastical affairs.

It is well known that the church of England was, at an early period, established by law in the colony of Virginia. It is also known that the bishop of London is the *diocesan* of the colonial churches. Of course he had ecclesiastical jurisdiction in this colony; the church in Virginia constituted an integral part of the church of England, and was represented by its bishop in the British parliament. Virginians who wished to take orders, were under the necessity of making a voyage to England for that purpose. The parishes here, however, were for the most part supplied by foreigners*, sent over for that purpose by the diocesan. It is easy to see what influence a foreign bishop would have over the colonies, under this arrangement. After the revolution, the episcopal clergy were very anxious to obtain the consecration of one or more bishops for the American churches. But the superiors of the English church refused to gratify this wish. Doubtless it was the policy of the British government to retain as much influence as possible over the people of this country; and we know that according to the constitution of England the *King* is supreme head of the church; and that the bishops are his dependents. The American episcopalians, however, (and we record it to their honour) urged their request; and at length Dr. Seabury of Connecticut, if I am rightly informed, went to Scotland, and obtained consecration from the episcopal bishops in that country. The dignitaries of the English church, when they found that a refusal would no longer be of any avail, granted the request, to which they had so long before refused to hearken.

In the year 1789, the Episcopalians in the United States held a general convention in Philadelphia, revised the book of common

*None, I trust, will imagine that the author imputes it as blame to any man that he is a *foreigner*; or would insinuate that he is to be undervalued on *that account*. On the contrary, some of his own best friends are natives of another country.

prayer, and adapted it to the new state of things in this country. Thus was their connexion with the church of England broken, and their dependence on it destroyed. A *new* society was formed under the title of "The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States."

The *former* episcopal church, on account of the connection and dependence which have been mentioned, was regarded with a considerable degree of jealousy and suspicion. Several other circumstances concurred to excite unpleasant feelings towards her in the breasts of dissenters, as they were then termed; especially the persecution to which several of their ministers had been subjected, and the taxes which they had been compelled to pay for the support of a church to which they did not belong. Evidence of these feelings will be found in the following memorials. But let our episcopal brethren consider how they would have felt, had liberty to preach been denied to them, and taxes laid on them for the support of baptist, methodist, or presbyterian preachers. Let it also be remembered that these feelings had for their object, a society, which, since the year abovementioned, has in our judgment *had no existence* in this country: for since that time there has been no *Church of England*, in any state or territory in the Union.

It was thought proper to make this explanation, least any should suspect that the publication of these papers at this time, is intended as an indirect attack on the protestant episcopal church. The state of things is greatly altered since the date of these papers. All societies in this country are now, as to all rights and privileges, on a perfect equality. There is among us no *high church*: there are no dissenters. Invidious distinctions are happily done away; and it is most devoutly to be wished that all *unbrotherly* feelings may be totally eradicated.

The reader is here informed that the following memorials have been copied from the originals preserved in the office of the clerk of the house of delegates, and open to the inspection of any one who wishes to examine them.

On the first of these papers it is needless to make any explanatory remarks. Its date, and the known state of the country at that time, sufficiently explain it.

MEMORIAL I. *Presented in the year* 1776.

To the honorable the General Assembly of Virginia.

The memorial of the Presbytery of Hanover humbly represents,

That your memorialists are governed by the same sentiments which have inspired the United States of America; and are determined that nothing in our power and influence shall be wanting to give success to their common cause. We would also represent, that dissenters from the church of England, in this country, have ever been desirous to conduct themselves as peaceable members of the civil government, for which reason they have hitherto submitted to several ecclesiastic burdens, and restrictions, that are in-

consistent with equal liberty. But now when the many and grievous oppressions of our mother country, have laid this continent under the necessity of casting off the yoke of tyranny, and of forming independent governments upon equitable and liberal foundations, we flatter ourselves that we shall be freed from all the incumbrances which a spirit of domination, prejudice, or bigotry, hath intervoven with most other political systems. This we are the more strongly encouraged to expect, by the Declaration of Rights, so universally applauded for that dignity, firmness and precision with which it delineates and asserts the privileges of society, and the prerogatives of human nature; and which we embrace as the *magna charta* of our commonwealth, that can never be violated without endangering the grand superstructure, it was destined to sustain. Therefore we rely upon this *Declaration*, as well as the justice of our honourable Legislature, to secure us the *free exercise of religion according to the dictates of our consciences*: and we should fall short in our duty to ourselves, and the many and numerous congregations under our care, were we, upon this occasion, to neglect laying before you a state of the religious grievances under which we have hitherto laboured; that they no longer may be continued in our present form of government.

It is well known, that in the frontier counties, which are justly supposed to contain a fifth part of the inhabitants of Virginia, the dissenters have borne the heavy burdens of purchasing glebes, building churches, and supporting the established clergy, where there are very few episcopalians, either to assist in bearing the expence, or to reap the advantage; and that throughout the other parts of the country, there are also many thousands of zealous friends and defenders of our State, who, besides the invidious, and disadvantageous restrictions to which they have been subjected, annually pay large taxes to support an establishment, from which their consciences and principles oblige them to dissent: all which are confessedly so many violations of their natural rights; and in their consequences, a restraint upon freedom of enquiry, and private judgment.

In this enlightened age, and in a land where all, of every denomination are united in the most strenuous efforts to be free, we hope and expect that our representatives will cheerfully concur in removing every species of religious, as well as civil bondage.—Certain it is, that every argument for civil liberty, gains additional strength when applied to liberty in the concerns of religion; and there is no argument in favour of establishing the christian religion, but what may be pleaded, with equal propriety, for establishing the tenets of Mahomed by those who believe the Alcoran: or if this be not true, it is at least impossible for the magistrate to adjudge the right of preference among the various sects that profess the christian faith, without erecting a chair of infallibility, which would lead us back to the church of Rome.

We beg leave farther to represent, that religious establishments are highly injurious to the temporal interests of any community. Without insisting upon the ambition, and the arbitrary practices of those who are favoured by government; or the intriguing seditious spirit, which is commonly excited by this, as well as every other kind of oppression; such establishments greatly retard population, and consequently the progress of arts, sciences, and manufactories: witness the rapid growth and improvements of the northern provinces, compared with this. No one can deny that the more early settlement, and the many superior advantages of our country, would have invited multitudes of artificers, mechanics, and other useful members of society, to fix their habitation among us, who have either remained in their place of nativity, or preferred worse civil governments, and a more barren soil, where they might enjoy the rights of conscience more fully than they had a prospect of doing it, in this. From which we infer, that Virginia might have now been the capitol of America, and a match for the British arms, without depending on others for the necessaries of war, had it not been prevented by her religious establishment.

Neither can it be made appear that the gospel needs any such civil aid. We rather conceive that when our blessed Saviour declares his *kingdom is not of this world*, he renounces all dependence upon state power, and as his *weapons are spiritual*, and were only designed to have influence on the judgment, and heart of man, we are persuaded that if mankind were left in the quiet possession of their unalienable religious privileges, christianity, as in the days of the apostles, would continue to prevail and flourish in the greatest purity, by its own native excellence, and under the all disposing providence of God.

We would also humbly represent, that the only proper objects of civil government, are the happiness and protection of men in the present state of existence; the security of the life, liberty, and property of the citizens; and to restrain the vicious and encourage the virtuous by wholesome laws, equally extending to every individual. But that *the duty which we owe our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can only be directed by reason and conviction*; and is no where cognizable but at the tribunal of the universal Judge.

Therefore we *ask no ecclesiastical establishments for ourselves*; neither can we approve of them when granted to others. This indeed would be giving exclusive or separate emoluments or privileges to one set (or sect) of men, without any special public services to the common reproach and injury of every other denomination. And for the reasons recited we are induced earnestly to entreat, that all laws now in force in this commonwealth, which countenance religious domination, may be speedily repealed—that all, of every religious sect, may be protected in the full exercise of their several modes of worship; and exempted from all taxes

for the support of any church whatsoever, further than what may be agreeable to their own private choice, or voluntary obligation.—This being done, all partial and invidious distinctions will be abolished, to the great honour and interest of the State; and every one be left to stand or fall according to merit, which can never be the case, so long as any one denomination is established in preference to others.

That the great Sovereign of the Universe may inspire you with unanimity, wisdom and resolution; and bring you to a just determination on all the important concerns before you, is the fervent prayer of your memorialists.

Signed by order of the Presbytery.

JOHN TODD, Moderator,
CALEB WALLACE, P. Cl'k.

In October, 1776, the Legislature passed a law exempting dissenters from contributions for the support of the established church. At that time the policy of a general assessment for the support of religion was much discussed. In the law above mentioned this subject was referred to the people, for the purpose of ascertaining their sentiments. This reference gave occasion to the following address from the presbytery of Hanover, at that time the only presbytery in Virginia. The Rev. Samuel S. Smith, and the Rev. David Rice were the committee who draughted it.

MEMORIAL II.

To the Honorable the General Assembly of Virginia.

The memorial of the Presbytery of Hanover, humbly represents, That your memorialists and the religious denomination with which we are connected, are most sincerely attached to the common interests of the American States and are determined that our most fervent prayers and strenuous endeavours shall ever be united with our fellow subjects to repel the assaults of tyranny and to maintain our common rights. In our former memorial we have expressed our hearty approbation of the Declaration of Rights, which has been made and adopted as the basis of the laws and government of this State; and now we take the opportunity of testifying that nothing has inspired us with greater confidence in our Legislature than the late act of Assembly declaring that equal liberty, as well religious as civil, shall be universally extended to the good people of this country; and that all the oppressive acts of parliament respecting religion which have been formerly enacted in the mother country, shall henceforth be of no validity or force in this commonwealth. As also exempting dissenters from all levies, taxes, and impositions, whatsoever, towards supporting the church of England as it now is or hereafter may be established. We would therefore have given our honorable Legislature no further trouble on this subject, but we are sorry to find that there yet remains a variety of opinions touching the propriety of a general assessment, or whether every religious society shall be left to voluntary contributions for the maintenance of the

ministers of the gospel who are of different persuasions. As this matter is deferred by our Legislature to the discussion and final determination of a future Assembly, when the opinions of the country, in general, shall be better known; we think it our indispensable duty again to repeat a part of the prayer of our former memorial, "That dissenters of every denomination may be exempted from all taxes for the support of any church whatsoever, further than what may be agreeable to the private choice or voluntary obligation of every individual; while the civil magistrates no otherwise interfere, than to protect them all in the full and free exercise of their several modes of worship." We then represented as the principal reasons upon which this request is founded, that the only proper objects of civil governments are, the happiness and protection of men in the present state of existence, the security of the life, liberty and property of the citizens, and to restrain the vicious and encourage the virtuous by wholesome laws equally extending to every individual: and that the duty which we owe our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can only be directed by reason and conviction, and is no where cognizable but at the tribunal of the universal Judge.

To illustrate and confirm these assertions, we beg leave to observe, that to judge for ourselves, and to engage in the exercise of religion agreeable to the dictates of our own consciences is an unalienable right, which upon the principles that the gospel was first propagated, and the reformation from popery carried on, can never be transferred to another. Neither does the church of Christ stand in need of a *general assessment* for its support; and most certain we are that it would be no advantage, but an injury to the society to which we belong: and as every good Christian believes that Christ has ordained a complete system of laws for the government of his kingdom, so we are persuaded that, by his providence, he will support it to its final consummation. In the fixed belief of this principle, that the kingdom of Christ, and the concerns of religion, are beyond the limits of civil control, we should act a dishonest, inconsistent part, were we to receive any emoluments from human establishments for the support of the gospel.

These things being considered, we hope we shall be excused for remonstrating against a general assessment for any religious purpose. As the maxims have long been approved, that every servant is to obey his master; and that, the hireling is accountable for his conduct to him from whom he receives his wages; in like manner, if the Legislature has any rightful authority over the ministers of the gospel in the exercise of their sacred office, and it is their duty to levy a maintenance for them as such; then it will follow that they may revive the old establishment in its former extent; or ordain a new one for any sect they think proper; they are invested with a power not only to determine, but it is incumbent on them to declare, who shall preach, what they shall preach;

to whom, when, and at what places they shall preach; or to impose any regulations and restrictions upon religious societies that they may judge expedient. These consequences are so plain as not to be denied; and they are so entirely subversive of religious liberty, that if they should take place in Virginia, we should be reduced to the melancholy necessity of saying with the apostles in like cases "judge ye whether it is best to obey God or man;" and also of acting as they acted.

Therefore, as it is contrary to our principles and interest; and, as we think, subversive of religious liberty, we do again most earnestly entreat that our Legislature would never extend any assessment for religious purposes to us, or to the congregations under our care. And your memorialists, as in duty bound, shall ever pray for, and demean themselves as peaceable subjects, of, civil government.

Signed by order of the Presbytery.

RICHARD SANKEY, Moderator.

Timber Ridge,
April 25, 1777.

On the following paper it is quite unnecessary to say any thing, as it sufficiently explains itself. It is believed to be the production of Messrs. Smith and Waddel.

Memorial of the Presbytery of Hanover in May, 1784.

To the honourable Speaker, and House of Delegates of Virginia.

Gentlemen,

The united clergy of the presbyterian church in Virginia, assembled in presbytery, request your attention to the following representation. In the late arduous struggle for every thing dear to us, a desire of perfect liberty, and political equality animated every class of citizens. An entire and everlasting freedom from every species of ecclesiastical domination, a full and permanent security of the unalienable rights of conscience, and private judgment, and an equal share of the protection and favour of government to all denominations of christians, were particular objects of our expectation, and irrefragable claim. The happy revolution effected by the virtuous exertions of our countrymen of various opinions in religion, was a favourable opportunity of obtaining these desirable objects without faction, contention, or complaint. All ranks of men, almost, felt the claims of justice, when the rod of oppression had scourged them into sensibility, and the powerful band of common danger had cordially united them together against civil encroachments. The members, therefore, of every religious society had a right to expect, and most of them did expect, that former invidious and exclusive distinctions, preferences, and emoluments conferred by the state on any one sect above others, would have been wholly removed. They justly supposed that any partiality of this kind, any particular and illicit connexion or commerce between the State, and one description of chris-

tians more than another, on account of peculiar opinions in religion, or in any thing else, would be unworthy of the representatives of a people perfectly free, and an infringement of that religious liberty, which enhances the value of other privileges in a state of society.

We, therefore, and the numerous body of citizens in our communion, as well as in many others, are justly dissatisfied and uneasy, that our expectations from the Legislature have not been answered in these important respects. We regret that the prejudices of education, the influence of partial custom, and habits of thinking confirmed by these, have too much confounded the distinction between matters purely religious, and the objects of human legislation, and have occasioned jealousy and dissatisfaction by injurious inequalities, respecting things which are connected with religious opinion, towards different sects of christians. That this uneasiness may not appear to be entertained without ground, we would wish to state the following unquestionable facts for the consideration of the House of Delegates.

The security of our religious rights upon equal and impartial ground, *instead of being made a fundamental part of our constitution, as it ought to have been,* is left to the precarious fate of common law. A matter of general and essential concern to the people, is committed to the hazard of the prevailing opinion of a majority of the Assembly at its different sessions. In consequence of this, the episcopal church was virtually regarded as the constitutional church, the church of the State, at the revolution ; and was left by the framers of our present government, in that station of unjust pre-eminence which she had formerly acquired under the smiles of royal favour. And even when the late oppressive establishment of that church was at length acknowledged an unreasonable hardship by the Assembly in 1776, a superiority and distinction in name was still retained, and it was expressly styled the *established church* as before ; which title was continued as late as the year 1778, and never formally disclaimed : our common danger at that time not permitting that opposition to the injustice of such distinction which it required and deserved.

But " a seat on the right hand of temporal glory as the established mother church" was not the only inequality then countenanced, and still subsisting, of which we now have reason to regret and complain. Substantial advantages were also confirmed and secured to her, by a partial and inequitable decree of government. We hoped the time past would have sufficed for the enjoyment of those emoluments, which that church long possessed without controul by the abridgement of the equal privileges of others, and the aid of their property wrested from them by the hand of usurpation : but we were deceived. An estate computed to be worth several hundred thousand pounds in churches, glebes, &c. derived from the pockets of all religious societies, was exclusively and unjustly appropriated to the benefit of *one,* without compensation or

restitution to the rest, who in many places, were a large majority of the inhabitants.

Nor is this the whole of the injustice we have felt in matters connected with religious opinion. The episcopal church is actually incorporated, and known in law as a body, so that it can receive and possess property for ecclesiastical purposes, without trouble or risk in securing it, while other christian communities are obliged to trust to the precarious fidelity of trustees chosen for the purpose. The episcopal clergy are considered as having a right, *ex officio*, to celebrate marriages throughout the State, while unnecessary hardships and restrictions are imposed upon other clergymen in the law relating to that subject passed in 1780, which confines their exercise of that function to those counties, where they receive a special licence from the court by recommendation, for recording which they are charged with certain fees by the clerk; and which exposes them to a heavy fine for delay in returning certificates of marriages to the office.

The vestries of the different parishes, a remnant of hierarchical domination, have a right by law to levy money from the people of all denominations for certain purposes; and yet these vestrymen are exclusively required by law to be members of the episcopal church, and to subscribe a conformity to its doctrines and discipline as *professed and practised in England*. Such preferences, distinctions and advantages granted by the Legislature exclusively to one sect of christians, are regarded by a great number of your constituents as glaringly unjust and dangerous. Their continuance so long in a Republic, without animadversion or correction by the assembly, affords just ground for alarm and complaint to a people, who feel themselves, by the favour of Providence happily free; who are conscious of having deserved as well from the State as those who are most favoured; who have an undoubted right to think themselves as orthodox in opinion upon every subject as others, and whose privileges are as dear to them. Such partiality to any system of religious opinion whatever, is inconsistent with the intention and proper object of well directed government, and obliges men of reflection to consider the Legislature which indulges it, as a party in religious differences, instead of the common guardian and equal protector of every class of citizens in their religious as well as civil rights. We have hitherto restrained our complaints from reaching our representatives, that we might not be thought to take advantages from times of confusion, or critical situations of government in an unsettled state of convulsion and war, to obtain what is our clear and incontestable right.

But as the happy restoration of peace affords leisure for reflection, we wish to state our sense of the objects of this memorial to your honourable house upon the present occasion; that it may serve to remind you of what might be unnoticed in a multitude of business, and remain as a remonstrance against future encroach-

ments from any quarter. That uncommon liberality of sentiment, which seems daily to gain ground in this enlightened period, encourages us to hope from your wisdom and integrity, gentlemen, a redress of every grievance and remedy of every abuse. Our invaluable privileges have been purchased by the common blood and treasure of our countrymen of different names and opinions, and therefore ought to be secured in full and perfect equality to them all. We are willing to allow a full share of credit to our fellow citizens, however distinguished in name from us, for their spirited exertions in our arduous struggle for liberty: we would not wish to charge any of them, either ministers or people, with open disaffection to the common cause of America, or with crafty dissimulation or indecision, till the issue of the war was certain, so as to oppose their obtaining equal privileges in religion; but we will resolutely engage against any monopoly of the honours and rewards of government by any one sect of christians more than the rest; for we shun not a comparison with any of our brethren, for our efforts in the cause of our country, and assisting to establish her liberties, and therefore esteem it unreasonable that any of them should reap superior advantages for, at most, but equal merit. We expect from the representatives of a free people, that all partiality and prejudice on any account whatever will be laid aside, and that the happiness of the citizens at large will be secured upon the broad basis of perfect political equality. This will engage confidence in government, and unsuspicious affection towards our fellow citizens. We hope that the Legislature will adopt some measures to remove present inequality, and resist any attempt, either at their present session or hereafter, to continue those which we now complain of. Thus by preserving a proper regard to every religious denomination as the common protectors of piety and virtue, you will remove every real ground of contention, and allay every jealous commotion on the score of religion. The citizens of Virginia will feel themselves free, unsuspicious, and happy in this respect. Strangers will be encouraged to share our freedom and felicity; and when civil and religious liberty go hand in hand, our late posterity will bless the wisdom and virtue of their fathers. We have the satisfaction to assure you that we are steady well wishers to the State, and your humble servants,

THE PRESBYTERY OF HANOVER.

In reference to the paper which follows, it is necessary that a few explanatory remarks should be made. The reader will perceive that it embraces two subjects; an incorporation of the clergy, and a general assessment for the support of religion. In the year 1784, the Protestant Episcopal Church was incorporated; and, as appears from the following memorial, it was proposed to incorporate the clergy "of certain other churches." The friends of the measure intended that the charter should be given to

clergy independently of the people with whom they were connected. The Presbytery set itself in direct opposition to this plan, and it must, I think, be acknowledged that the reasoning contained in their memorial is creditable both to their understanding, and their patriotism.

About the same time a general assessment for the support of religion was proposed, and was advocated by some of the most able and popular men in Virginia; and among others by PATRICK HENRY. The general belief was that the measure would be carried in spite of all opposition. Under this impression, the Presbytery resolved to attempt by remonstrances to the Legislature, so to modify the plan, as to make it as harmless as possible. With this view they presented the reasoning contained in the latter part of the memorial. The reader will be pleased to keep in mind this explanation.

MEMORIAL IV.

The Presbytery of Hanover, to the Assembly, in October, 1784.

To the Honourable Speaker and House of Delegates of Virginia.

Gentlemen,

The united Clergy of the Presbyterian church of Virginia assembled in Presbytery, beg leave again to address your honourable house, upon a few important subjects, in which we find ourselves interested as citizens of this State.

The freedom we possess is so rich a blessing, and the purchase of it has been so high, that we would ever wish to cherish a spirit of vigilant attention to it, in every circumstance of possible danger. We are anxious to retain a full share of all the privileges which our happy revolution affords, and cannot but feel alarmed at the continued existence of any infringement upon them, or even any indirect attempt tending to this. Impressed with this idea as men, whose rights are sacred and dear to them, ought to be, we are obliged to express our sensibility upon the present occasion and we naturally direct our appeal to you, gentlemen, as the public guardians of your country's happiness and liberty, who are influenced we hope by that wisdom and justice which your high station requires. Conscious of the rectitude of our intentions and the strength of our claims, we wish to speak our sentiments freely upon these occasions, but at the same time with all that respectful regard, which becomes us, when addressing the representatives of a great and virtuous people. It is with pain that we find ourselves obliged to renew our complaints upon the subjects stated in our memorial last spring. We deeply regret that such obvious grievances should exist unredressed in a Republic, whose end ought to be the happiness of all the citizens. We presumed that immediate redress would have succeeded a clear and just representation of them; as we expect, that it is always the desire of our representatives to remove real grounds of uneasiness, and allay jealous commotions amongst the people. But as the objects of the memorial,

ble consequences, have not yet been obtained, we request that the House of Delegates would be pleased to recollect what we had the honour to state to them in that paper at their last sessions; to resume the subject in their present deliberation; and to give it that weight which its importance deserves. The uneasiness which we feel from the continuance of the grievances just referred to, is increased under the prospect of an addition to them by certain exceptionable measures said to be proposed to the Legislature.—— We have understood that a comprehensive incorporating act, has been and is at present in agitation, whereby ministers of the gospel as such, of certain descriptions, shall have legal advantages which are not proposed to be extended to the people at large of any denomination. A proposition has been made by some gentlemen in the House of Delegates we are told, to extend the grace to us, amongst others, in our professional capacity. If this be so, we are bound to acknowledge with gratitude our obligations to such gentlemen for their inclination to favour us with the sanction of public authority in the discharge of our duty. But as the scheme of incorporating clergymen, *independent of the religious communities to which they belong*, is inconsistent with our ideas of propriety, we request the liberty of declining any such solitary honour should it be again proposed. To form clergymen into a distinct order in the community, and especially where it would be possible for them to have the principal direction of a considerable public estate by such incorporation, has a tendency to render them independent, at length, of the churches whose ministers they are; and this has been too often found by experience to produce ignorance, immorality, and neglect of the duties of their station.

Besides, if clergymen were to be erected by the State into a distinct political body, detached from the rest of the citizens, with the express design of "enabling them to direct spiritual matters," which we all possess without such formality, it would naturally tend to introduce that antiquated and absurd system, in which government is owned, in effect, to be the fountain head of spiritual influences to the church. It would establish an immediate, a peculiar, and for that very reason, in our opinion, illicit connexion between government, and such as were thus distinguished. The Legislature in that case would be the head of a religious party, and its dependent members would be entitled to all decent reciprocity, to a becoming paternal and fostering care. This we suppose, would be giving a preference, and creating a distinction between citizens equally good, on account of something entirely foreign from civil merit, which would be a source of endless jealousies, and inadmissible in a Republic or any other well directed government.—The principle too, which this system aims to establish, is both false and dangerous to religion, and we take this opportunity to remonstrate and protest against it. The real ministers of true religion, derive their authority to act in the duties of their profes-

er respectable. Their office relates to the care of the soul, and preparing it for a future state of existence, and their administrations are, or ought to be, of a spiritual nature suited to this momentous concern. And it is plain from the very nature of the case, that they should neither expect, nor receive from government any permission or direction in this respect. We hope therefore that the House of Delegates shares so large a portion of that philosophic and liberal discernment, which prevails in America at present, as to see this matter in its proper light—and that they will understand too well the nature of their duty, as the equal and common guardians of the chartered rights of all the citizens, to permit a connexion of this kind we have just now mentioned, to subsist between them and the spiritual instructors of any religious denomination in the State.—The interference of government in religion, cannot be indifferent to us, and as it will probably come under consideration at the present session of the Assembly, we request the attention of the honourable House, to our sentiments upon this head.

We conceive that human legislation, ought to have human affairs alone for its concern. Legislators in free States possess delegated authority, for the good of the community at large in its political or civil capacity.

The existence, preservation and happiness of society should be their only object; and to this their public cares should be confined. Whatever is not materially connected with this, lies not within their province as statesmen. The thoughts, the intentions, the faith, and the consciences of men, with their modes of worship, lie beyond their reach, and are ever to be referred to a higher and more penetrating tribunal. These internal and spiritual matters cannot be measured by human rules, nor be amenable to human laws. It is the duty of every man, for himself, to take care of his immortal interests in a future state, where we are to account for our conduct as individuals; and it is by no means the business of a Legislature to attend to this, for THERE governments and states as collective bodies shall no more be known.

Religion therefore as a spiritual system, and its ministers in a professional capacity, ought not to be under the direction of the State.

Neither is it necessary to their existence that they should be publicly supported by a legal provision for the purpose, as tried experience hath often shewn; although it is absolutely necessary to the existence and welfare of every political combination of men in society, to have the support of religion and its solemn institutions, as affecting the conduct of rational beings more than human laws can possibly do. On this account it is wise policy in legislators to seek its alliance and solicit its aid in a civil view, because of its happy influence upon the morality of its citizens, and its tendency to preserve the veneration of an oath, or an appeal to heaven, which is the cement of the social union. It is upon this

principle alone, in our opinion, that a legislative body has a right to interfere in religion at all, and of consequence we suppose that this interference ought only to extend to the preserving of the public worship of the Deity, and the supporting of institutions for inculcating the great fundamental principles of all religion, without which society could not easily exist.—Should it be thought necessary at present for the Assembly to exert this right of supporting religion in general by an assessment on all the people, we would wish it to be done on the most *liberal plan*. A general assessment of the kind we have heard proposed is an object of such consequence that it excites much anxious speculation amongst your constituents.

We therefore earnestly pray that nothing may be done in the case, inconsistent with the proper objects of human legislation or the Declaration of rights as published at the Revolution. We hope that the assessment will not be proposed under the idea of supporting religion as a spiritual system, relating to the care of the soul and preparing it for its future destiny. We hope that no attempt will be made to point out articles of faith, that are not essential to the preservation of society; or to settle modes of worship; or to interfere in the internal government of religious communities; *or to render the ministers of religion independent of the will of the people whom they serve.* We expect from our representatives, that careful attention to the political equality of all the citizens, which a Republic ought ever to cherish; and that no scheme of an assessment will be encouraged which will violate the happy privilege we now enjoy of thinking for ourselves in all cases where conscience is concerned.

We request the candid indulgence of the honourable house to the present address; and their most favourable construction of the motives which induce us to obtrude ourselves into public notice. We are urged by a sense of duty. We feel ourselves impressed with the importance of the present crisis. We have expressed ourselves in the plain language of freemen, upon the interesting subjects which called for animadversion; and we hope to stand excused with you, gentlemen, for the manner in which it is executed, as well as for the part we take in the public interests of the community. In the present important moment, we conceived it criminal to be silent; and have therefore attempted to discharge a duty which we owe to our religion as christians; to ourselves as freemen; and to our posterity, who ought to receive from us a precious birthright of perfect freedom and political equality.

That you may enjoy the direction of Heaven in your present deliberations, and possess in a high degree the spirit of your exalted station, is the prayer of your sincere well wishers,

THE PRESBYTERY OF HANOVER.

Whatever might have been the effect of this remonstrance, we know that the measure under consideration was arrested in its progress, after "A bill to provide for the support of Religion,"

had been engrossed for a third reading. This gave an opportunity for such an expression of public sentiment as completely decided the matter. There is in the office of the clerk of the House of Delegates a petition in the same hand writing with the original of the preceding memorial*, signed by 10,000 names, in favour of complete religious liberty. In the mean time however the Presbytery of Hanover met; and in the records of that session, is to be found the following minute;

"*Bethel, May* 19, 1785.

"A petition was presented to the Presbytery, from the session of Augusta congregation, requesting an explanation of the "word *liberal*, as used in the Presbytery's memorial of last *Fall*; "as also of the motives and end of the Presbytery in sending it "to the Assembly. Messrs. Hoge and Carrick are appointed a "committee to prepare an answer to the above petition, and report to Presbytery."

The answer to the petition does not appear on the records; but the above quotation is immediately followed by a decision very much in point.

"On motion, the opinion of Presbytery was taken "Whether they do approve of any kind of an assessment by the General Assembly for the support of religion? *Presbytery are unanimously against such a measure.*"

The foregoing account completely explains a subject which has been considerably misunderstood by some, and misrepresented by others. It has been supposed from the latter part of the memorial now under consideration that the Presbytery of Hanover was in favour of an assessment of some kind; when in fact it was only their purpose, as before stated, to render a measure which they thought inevitable, as harmless as possible. If any doubt remains yet in the mind of any one, it will be completely dissipated by the following extract; which, in the records of Presbytery, immediately succeeds the preceding one.

"On motion, the opinion of Presbytery, and likewise of several members of different congregations present, was taken, "Whether a general convention of the Presbyterian Body was "expedient in our present circumstances? It was unanimously "agreed to; and an invitation was accordingly signed by the "ministers, and several private members of the Presbyterian "church to the whole body, to send representatives to a convention proposed to be held at Bethel, on the 10th day of next "August."

The Convention here called, met at the time and place specified; and among other proceedings, adopted the following memorial; which was presented to the General Assembly at its next meeting, and supported in a most able manner by the Rev. John

*Believed to be the writing of the Rev. Jno. B. Smith.

B. Smith, who was heard for three successive days, as I have been informed, at the bar of the house.

To the Honourable the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Ministers and Lay Representatives of the Presbyterian Church in Virginia, assembled in Convention, beg leave to address you.

As citizens of this State, not so by accident but choice, and having willingly conformed to the system of civil policy adopted for our government, and defended it with the foremost at the risk of every thing dear to us, we feel ourselves deeply interested in all the measures of the Legislature.

When the late happy revolution secured to us an exemption from British control, we hoped that the gloom of injustice and usurpation would have been forever dispelled by the cheering rays of liberty and independence.—This inspired our hearts with resolution in the most distressful scenes of adversity and nerved our arm in the day of battle. But our hopes have since been overcast with apprehension when we found how slowly and unwillingly, ancient distinctions among the citizens on account of religious opinions were removed by the Legislature. For although the glaring partiality of obliging all denominations to support the one which had been the favorite of government, was pretty early withdrawn, yet an evident predilection in favor of that church, still subsisted in the acts of the Assembly—Peculiar distinctions and the honor of an important name, were still continued; and these are considered as equally partial and injurious with the ancient emoluments. Our apprehensions on account of the continuance of these, which could have no other effect than to produce jealous animosities, and unnecessary contentions among different parties, were increased when we found that they were tenaciously adhered to by government notwithstanding the remonstrances of several christian societies. To increase the evil a manifest disposition has been shown by the State, to consider itself as possessed of supremacy in *spirituals*, as well as *temporals*; and our fears have been realized in certain proceedings of the General Assembly at their last sessions. The engrossed bill for establishing a provision for the teachers of the Christian religion and the act for incorporating the Protestant Episcopal Church, so far as it secures to that church, the churches, glebes, &c. procured at the expense of the whole community, are not only evidences of this, but of an impolitic partiality which we are sorry to have observed so long.

We therefore in the name of the Presbyterian church in Virginia, beg leave to exercise our privilege as freemen in remonstrating against the former absolutely, and against the latter under the restrictions above expressed.

We oppose the Bill,

Because it is a departure from the proper line of Legislation;

Because it is unnecessary, and inadequate to its professed end—impolitic, in many respects—and a direct violation of the Declaration of Rights.

The end of civil government is security to the temporal liberty and property of mankind, and to protect them in the free exercise of religion. Legislators are invested with powers from their constituents, for these purpose only; and their duty extends no farther. Religion is altogether personal, and the right of exercising it unalienable; and it is not, cannot, and ought not to be, resigned to the will of the society at large; and much less to the Legislature, which derives its authority wholly from the consent of the people, and is limited by the original intention of civil associations.

We never resigned to the control of government, our right of determining for ourselves, in this important article; and acting agreeably to the convictions of reason and conscience, in discharging our duty to our Creator. And therefore, it would be an unwarrantable stretch of prerogative, in the legislature, to make laws concerning it, except for protection. And it would be a fatal symptom of abject slavery in us, were we to submit to the usurpation.

The Bill is also an unnecessary, and inadequate expedient for the end proposed.——We are fully persuaded of the happy influence of christianity upon the morals of men; but we have never known it, in the history of its progress, so effectual for this purpose, as when left to its native excellence and evidence to recommend it, under the all directing providence of God, and free from the intrusive hand of the civil magistrate. Its divine Author did not think it necessary to render it dependent on earthly governments. And experience has shown, that this dependence, where it has been effected, has been an injury rather than an aid. It has introduced corruption among the teachers and professors of it, wherever it has been tried, for hundreds of years, and has been destructive of genuine morality, in proportion to the zeal of the powers of this world, in arming it with the sanction of legal terrors, or inviting to its profession by honours and rewards.

It is urged, indeed, by the abettors of this bill, that it would be the means of cherishing religion and morality among the citizens. But it appears from fact, that these can be promoted only by the internal conviction of the mind, and its voluntary choice, which such establishments cannot effect.

We farther remonstrate against the bill as an impolitic measure:

It disgusts so large a proportion of citizens, that it would weaken the influence of government in other respects, and diffuse a spirit of opposition to the rightful exercise of constitutional authority, if enacted into a law:

It partially supposes the Quakers and Menomists to be more faithful in conducting the religious interests of their societies, than the other sects—which we apprehend to be contrary to fact;

It unjustly suspects men who may be good citizens, but who have not embraced our common faith, to the hardship of supporting a system, they have not as yet believed the truth of; and deprives them of their property, for what they do not suppose to be of importance to them:

It establishes a precedent for further encroachments, by making the Legislature judges of religious truth. If the Assembly have a right to determine the preference between christianity, and the other systems of religion that prevail in the world, they may also, at a convenient time, give a preference to some favoured sect among christians:

It discourages the population of our country by alarming those who may have been oppressed by religious establishments in other countries, with fears of the same in this: and by exciting our own citizens to emigrate to other lands of greater freedom:

It revives the principle which our ancestors contested to blood, of attempting to reduce all religions to one standard by the force of civil authority:

And it naturally opens a door for contention among citizens of different creeds, and different opinions respecting the extent of the powers of government.

The bill is also a direct violation of the Declaration of Rights, which ought to be the standard of all laws. The sixteenth article is clearly infringed upon by it, and any explication which may have been given of it by the friends of this measure in the Legislature, so as to justify a departure from its literal construction, might also be used to deprive us of other fundamental principles of our government.

For these reasons, and others that might be produced, we conceive it our duty to remonstrate and protest against the said bill; and earnestly urge that it may not be enacted into a law.

We also wish to engage your attention a little further, while we request a revision of the act for incorporating the Protestant Episcopal Church: and state our reasons for this request. We do not desire to oppose the incorporation of that church for the better management of its *temporalities*; neither do we wish to lessen the attachment of any of the members of the Legislature, in a private capacity, to the interests of that church. We rather wish to cultivate a spirit of forbearance and charity towards the members of it, as the servants of one common master who differ in some particulars from each other—But we cannot consent that they shall receive particular notice or favour from government as a Christian Society; nor peculiar distinctions or emoluments.

We find by the act, that the convenience of the Episcopal church hath been consulted by it, in the management of their interests as a religious society, at the expence of other denominations. Under the former establishment, there were perhaps few men who did not, at length, perceive the hardships and injustice of a compulsory law, obliging the citizens of this State by birth-

right free, to contribute to the support of a religion, from which their reason and conscience obliged them to dissent. Who then would not have supposed that the same sense of justice, which induced the legislature to dissolve the grievous establishment, would also have induced them to leave to common use, the property in churches, glebes, &c. which had been acquired by common purchase.

To do otherwise was, as we conceive, to suppose that long prescription could sanction injustice; and that to persist in error, is to alter the essential difference between right and wrong. As christians also, the subjects of Jesus Christ, who are wholly opposed to the exercise of spiritual powers by civil rulers, we conceive ourselves obliged to remonstrate against that part of the incorporating act, which authorises and directs the regulation of spiritual concerns. This is such an invasion of Divine prerogative, that it is highly exceptionable on that account, as well as on account of the danger to which it exposes our religious liberties. Jesus Christ hath given sufficient authority to his church, for every lawful purpose: and it is forsaking his authority and direction, for that of fallible men, to expect or to grant the sanction of civil law to authorise the regulation of any christian society. It is also dangerous to our liberties, because it creates an invidious distinction on account of religious opinions, and exalts to a superior pitch of grandeur, as the church of the State, a society which ought to be contented with receiving the same protection from government, which the other societies enjoy, without aspiring to superior notice or regard. The Legislature assumes to itself by that law, the authoritative direction of this church in spirituals; and can be considered in no other light than its head, peculiarly interested in its welfare; a matter which cannot be indifferent to us—though this authority has only as yet been extended to those who have requested it, or acquiesced in it. This church is now considered as the only regular church in the view of the law: and it is thereby raised to a state of unjust pre-eminence over others. And how far it may increase in dignity and influence in the State, by these means at a future day, and especially when aided by the emoluments which it possesses, and the advantages of funding a very large sum of money without account, time alone can discover. But we esteem it our duty to oppose the act thus early, before the matter be entangled in precedents more intricate and dangerous. Upon the whole, therefore, we hope that the exceptionable parts of this act, will be repealed by your honourable House; and that all preferences, distinctions, and advantages, contrary to the fourth article of the Declaration of Rights will be forever abolished.

We regret that full equality in all things, and ample protection and security to religious liberty were not incontestibly fixed in the constitution of the government. But we earnestly request that the defect may be remedied, as far as it is possible for the

Legislature to do it, by the adopting the bill in the revised laws for establishing religious freedom. (Chap. 82 of the Report.)

That Heaven may illuminate your minds with all that wisdom which is necessary for the important purposes of your deliberation, is our earnest wish. And we beg leave to assure you, that however warmly we may engage in preserving our religion free from the shackles of human authority, and opposing claims of spiritual domination in civil powers, we are zealously disposed to support the government of our country, and to maintain a due submission to the lawful exercise of its authority.

Signed by order of the Convention.

JOHN TODD, Chairman.

Attest, DANIEL MCCALLA, Clk.

Bethel, Augusta County, 13th August, 1785.

These memorials distinctly show what were, at that time the sentiments of the Presbyterian church in Virginia. The extracts made from the constitution of this church prove that the principles of the whole society in the United States are decidedly republican. Perhaps it ought to have been mentioned before, that previously to the year 1788 the Presbyterian church was governed by its presbyteries and synods in the several States, without a common bond of union. But in the year just mentioned, the constitution so often quoted was formed and adopted. And that in the year 1805 it was revised and amended, and again solemnly adopted by all the Presbyterians in the Union from New York to Georgia.

That it may be clearly seen that the principles of the Presbyterians have undergone no change, the Author will add an extract from "the report of the committee appointed" (by the synod, in the year 1813) "to digest a plan for conducting the study of Divinity in the Theological Seminary of Virginia." Which report, by the way, was adopted by the fullest meeting of synod that has been held for a number of years. And this, before there was any thought of applying to the Legislature, for an act of incorporation.

"Church history will also merit the particular attention of "the theological student. It will afford him an opportunity of "contrasting the results of different systems of religious senti-"ments, and consequently, of distinguishing, with greater cer-"tainty, the true from the false: it will point out the dangers to "be apprehended from every species of *Ecclesiastical domination*, "as well as from RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS: it will teach "him to avoid the rocks, upon which others have made ship-"wreck: and it will set before him, many illustrious examples of "piety and virtue, which he will, there is reason to hope, be indu-"ced to imitate."

Since the religious liberties of the people have been established on a sure foundation, that church has had no occasion to intermeddle with political affairs. Nor does it ever interfere with them. In relation to the questions of policy or expediency which divide the citizens of these States, it leaves every member to think and act for himself. Indeed any attempt by the judicatories of the church to exercise an influence in this respect, would be regarded by the members of the church as utterly unconstitutional; (we refer to the church constitution) and any decree of a presbytery, synod, or assembly in relation to civil or political matters would be considered by the church at large to have no more validity than a law passed by the Legislature of Virginia, to create an order of nobility, or establish a monarchy would have.

Moreover, such is the constitution of the Presbyterian church, that its ministers can have, comparatively, very little official influence in any matters. The clergymen, we have seen, are all on a perfect level. No authority or patronage is known among them. And in each particular congregation, discipline is maintained, and church business conducted by the *Session*, composed of ruling elders, chosen, the reader will recollect, by the people. The minister only presides and gives a casting vote. This induces a spirit of independence both in thinking and acting, which has in every age characterised this denomination of christians; and which we esteem the glory of the church. The society in general understand their rights and privileges well, and are at all times ready to maintain them.

If after all this, any should entertain doubts, as to the matters under consideration, let them, if they can, produce evidence that any church session, presbytery, synod, or general assembly in the United States has, in any way whatever interfered in the political affairs of the country since the date of the above memorial—unless it be thought an interference to appoint days of fasting and prayer when the country is in danger, and days of thanksgiving and praise, when by the favour of Providence, the danger is removed. And if the evidence that has been called for cannot be produced, let the clamour that has been raised on this subject cease.

Of the disposition of the Presbyterian Church towards other Societies.

An illustration of the character of the Presbyterians ought to show what their disposition and conduct are, towards Christians of other denominations. Many things have been said of their want of liberality, their moroseness, and austerity, by persons, who, perhaps, have never taken much pains to study either the history of the church, or the precise meaning of words.

But however this may be, an exhibition of the principles and conduct of the society will give the public an opportunity of judging with what propriety remarks of that kind have been made.

Let the reader attend to the following extract. In the constitution of the Presbyterian church, the pernicious nature of the opinion that represents it as a matter of small consequence what a man's faith is, having been stated, the following maxim is laid down:

"That while, under the conviction of the above principle, "they think it necessary to make effectual provision, that all "who are admitted as teachers, be sound in the faith; they also "believe, that there are truths and forms, with respect to which "men of good characters and principles may differ: *and in all "these they think it the duty, both of private Christians and societies, to exercise mutual forbearance towards each other.*"

Let the reader inquire whether there is another confession, or church constitution, in the world, that has set forth such a principle.

But let us see what the practice, of the Presbyterian church in Virginia has been. Because it is

> ——"In the deed,
> "The unequivocal authentic deed,
> "We have sound argument; we read the heart."

In the year 1787, a gentleman of no inconsiderable standing in society, a minister of the Episcopal church, united himself with the Presbyterians. In the records of the Presbytery that received him are found the following words: "Mr. ********* "received the right hand of fellowship, "THE PRESBYTERY "ESTEEMING HIM REGULARLY ORDAINED," and took his seat as a stated member.

In the year 1802, a preacher in the Baptist church, applied for admission into the Presbyterian society as a minister. The Presbytery put this gentleman on such trials as seemed necessary; and in the mean time, that the judgment of a higher judicatory might be had in the case, a reference was made to the synod of Virginia in the following form:

—"As this is a new and important case, resolved, that the "following question be brought before synod at their next meeting "by way of overture. A regularly ordained minister of the "Baptist church applies to a Presbytery to be received as a min"ister of the gospel in connection with them: is his admission to "be considered as valid?" The clerk was ordered to bring this "overture before Synod at their next meeting."

The synod decided unanimously that the ordination was valid, And accordingly we find that at a meeting of Hanover Presbytery in 1804, the gentleman alluded to was received "As a member in full standing" and invited "to take his seat; which he did accordingly."

In the year 1809 a Methodist preacher, belonging to that particular class distinguished by the name of Republican Methodists was received as a member of Hanover Presbytery, his ordination of course having been sustained as regular and valid.

It may not be amiss to observe that these cases have been taken from official records; and thus authenticated, they sufficiently prove what is the spirit of the Presbyterian church in relation to Episcopal, Baptist and Methodist churches. The validity of their ordinations is recognized, their ministrations, of course, are acknowledged to be authorised; and the churches themselves are owned as sister churches.

The following is extracted from "The Report" already quoted "of the committee appointed (by the Synod) to digest a plan "for conducting the study of Divinity in the Theological Semi-"nary of Virginia."

"As our Theological Seminary is not intended *exclusively* "for the advantage of *any denomination*, it seems hardly neces-"sary to observe that party zeal, instead of being fostered and "promoted, is to be *proscribed*, and *banished* from all its offices— "that the students are to be taught to distinguish between the "*essentials* of the Christian religion, respecting which the Pro-"testant churches are so generally agreed; and the *circumstan-"tials* about which there have been so many warm and fruitless "debates: and that instead of kindling, wherever they go, the "wide wasting flames of religious controversy, it should be ear-"nestly recommended to them to keep, and that with all denomi-"tions, as far as a proper regard for the faith once delivered to "the saints will permit, "the unity of the spirit, in the bond of "peace."

Here are proofs sufficient to convince every impartial reader, that the spirit of the Presbyterian church is catholic and liberal, in an eminent degree. Where is the society that has thus publicly recognized other societies? What other instance can be produced of a church that has established a seminary principally for the education of the *poor and pious* youth, and freely offered the benefits of the institution to all?

In addition to these things, an appeal is confidently made to the public as a competent judge of facts.—The Presbyterians have had a standing in Virginia for about seventy years. Their preachers have generally been men of good education, and respectable talents; and some have been endowed with genius of high order; for instance, Davies, Waddel, Graham, and the Smiths. And where are their controversial writings? They endured many hardships from the church of England; and had provocation sufficient to have roused less peaceable and forbearing men. But they were silent.—Their preachers are generally zealous and active men. What is the character of their sermons? When the hungry sheep look up to be fed, instead of receiving the bread of life, are they crammed with the husks of controversy? Do Presbyterian preachers find the distinctive peculiarities of their sect in every passage of scripture taken for a text? Verily they do not— and if any affirm to the contrary, instead of dealing in general accusations, which with reasoning men pass for nothing, let them point out particular instances, and establish the facts alleged.

As to the private intercourse of the ministers of that church with the people, let all who know them, say whether they discover a proselyte-hunting spirit? For my own part, I know of not a single example of such a disposition. Nor do I believe that such an one can be produced. In fact, I have never heard an instance of a minister of that society attempting to make converts from other denominations of christians. Had they done so, their numbers in Virginia would have far exceeded the present amount.

Notwithstanding all this, some may perhaps persist in making the charge. What idea such persons have of liberality I can form no conjecture. It is confessed that Presbyterian preachers insist upon it that unbelief is sinful, yea ruinous to the soul: they also maintain that professors of religion are bound to live consistently with their profession; that we must practise mortification and self denial; and that many indulgencies in which gentlemen think proper to allow themselves, have an unfavourable influence on the spirit of piety, and in many cases, either directly or indirectly, on public morals. It is confessed, in a word, that their discipline is strict, and their system of morality, what the world would call, severe. But if this is illiberality, the inquirer will find that the Apostles and primitive Christians were much more illiberal—and if the Presbyterians are condemned for it, the inspired teachers of the religion of Jesus Christ cannot escape censure.

It is certainly very accommodating to adapt a system of religious duty to the prevailing taste, and what may be called, the ruling passions of the age. And if we disturb no man in his pursuits of ambition, wealth, or pleasure, we may obtain the pleasure of being the *most liberal men in the world.* But in our estimation, this would be giving a great deal more for a thing than it is worth. It would be a sacrifice of conscience, and indeed of genuine charity for an ambiguous character, which the votaries of the world are pleased to denominate *liberal.* The amount of the system of these gentlemen is just this: "Allow me to live as I please: grant that I am in a fair way to Heaven, think, say, or do, what I may; and you shall be the preacher for me.

———Et eris mihi magnus Apollo."

Let us apply the common notions about liberality to some other subject than that of religion, and we shall quickly ascertain whether they are just or not. A fierce and high toned monarchist appears among us, and vehemently declaims against our republican institutions; at the same time asserting that regal government is of Divine right, and best adapted to the condition of man, and the promotion of political prosperity and national glory. Every man amongst us would cry out at once against such a heresy as this. And we should think no epithets in the language strong enough adequately to express our sense of the enormity of

such error. He, however, with a cool malicious sneer, insinuates that we are the most illiberal men in the world, and that our treatment of him clearly shows that a republican government is not fit for gentlemen. Would not every man at once be struck with his misapplication of language? And would it not require greater moderation than falls to the lot of most men, not to retort with severity upon him? The application of this case is left to the reader, with only this monition, that the terms liberal and illiberal have the same meaning when applied to religion, as when used in reference to the common affairs of life.

It is foreign to the Author's purpose to enter on an exposition of the doctrines of the Presbyterian church in this place.—Nor is it necessary; because they are the common doctrines of the reformed churches. This is so true, that I have never known a Presbyterian preacher who would not readily subscribe to the *doctrines* of the Augsburg Confession, the Confession of Geneva, the Heidelburg catechism, the Canons of the Synod of Dort, the Scotch Confession, or the doctrinal part of the thirty nine articles of the church of England. There is indeed a wonderful and pleasing harmony in the sentiments of the Protestants generally in relation to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. The differences, which for the most part exist among them, as far as concerns their standards of faith, are differences as to church government, discipline, and forms of worship. The Presbyterians understanding this have recommended charity and mutual forbearance in the constitution of their church, in happy coincidence with the very expressions contained in the Declaration of Rights.

Of the Theological Seminary.

We have now made some exhibition of the character and conduct of the Presbyterians in Virginia. We have adduced (as seems to us) conclusive evidence that the members of this society are, and always have been, zealous and active friends of political, and religious liberty; that they are opposed to all establishments, and general assessments; and that they are disposed to cultivate a liberal and brotherly spirit in relation to other denominations of Christians. A few words will be added in relation to the seminary established under the auspices of the synod, and the petition presented by the trustees of the school for a charter.

The petition is in these words:

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Delegates of Virginia.

The petition of the trustees of the Theological Seminary of Virginia respectfully sheweth; that, a few years past, the institution which they represent was set on foot at Hampden Sidney College in this State, having for its principal object the education of poor and pious young men for the ministry of the gospel; that funds have been raised from time to time, by charitable donation,

which have been successfully applied to the important object of the institution; that the directors of this institution, rejoicing in the religious freedom which has been established in this commonwealth, and which has placed every denomination of Christians on an equal footing, have never thought of confining the benefits of the institution to believers of their own church merely; on the contrary, acting on the principle of equal liberty, which distinguishes the law of the land, and in that spirit of fraternal amity which no less eminently distinguishes the gospel, they have opened the benefits of the institution to persons of all religious persuasions, without interfering, in the smallest degree, with the peculiar tenets of the Christian student; their wish and purpose merely being that this seminary may become a school of religious instruction in the great principles of the Christian faith, without endeavouring to influence the belief on those minuter points, on which Christians differ in opinion; that the synod of Virginia, impressed with the importance of an institution having in view an object so high and sacred, and conducted on principles so liberal and benign, are anxious to give it permanency, and to diffuse its benefits as far and wide as possible; satisfied that the Legislature of Virginia will never withhold its countenance from any institution whose simple purpose is the general advancement of Christianity, and the propagation of the gospel of salvation: that with this view, your petitioners are anxious to have it in their power to invest the funds which they now hold, and which they may hereafter derive from voluntary contribution, in any property which they may find most productive, to manage such property to the best advantage for the seminary, and thus to enable the institution to act with effect as a school of religious instruction: Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Rev. Dr. Moses Hoge, as president, and Dr. George A. Baxter, Drury Lacy, John H. Rice, Richard N. Venable, Samuel B. Wilson, Samuel W. Venable, Conrad Speece, James Morton, Henry E. Watkins, Benjamin Harrison, Wm. Wirt, Stephen Bovelle, Josiah Leake, Wm. Hill, and Matthew Lyle, and their successors, may be made a body corporate, under the name and style of the President and Trustees of the Theological Seminary of the Synod of Virginia, with such powers as the House, in its wisdom, may deem meet and appropriate to the objects aforesaid, and your petitioners, as in duty bound will pray, &c.

On behalf of the President and Trustees.

WILLIAM HILL,
JOHN H. RICE,
WILLIAM WIRT,
} A Committee of the Trustees appointed for this purpose.

The reasons why the synod of Virginia undertook to establish this school, were summarily these: They believe that Christianity is a system of religion given by God in his mercy to man: they know that this system, calculated to promote the present and future happiness of the human family, is ordinarily propagated by teachers appointed for that purpose. It is required by the sacred

tution of the Presbyterian church that their ministers should be men of education ; and it is, at least, generally admitted that this is expedient. Not many men of talents however, have that zeal for religion, which will induce them to engage in a laborious and by no means lucrative profession. The population of the country is increasing with unexampled rapidity, so that the number of learned men in the ministry is becoming proportionably smaller every year. The only remedy for this evil that occurred to the synod was to establish a seminary for the education of *poor* and *pious* youth for the ministry of the gospel. They wished this institution to be in Virginia, that its alumni, might grow up under the influence of the sentiments and manners of their native State. And they determined to make their institution accessible to all denominations, because they have no wish to confine its advantages to themselves : on the contrary it is their desire that *every preacher* of the gospel, without distinction, may be furnished with every gift and grace that can adorn his profession, and every accomplishment, intellectual as well as moral that will qualify him for the honourable and useful discharge of his high and holy office.— They, moreover, believed that, by exciting an interest in favour of the Institution among Christians of every name, in a very short time, it would become an ornament to their native State. In addition to this, they believed that by educating at the same school, young men of different religious persuasions, such habits of affectionate attachment, and reciprocal esteem would be superinduced, as would continue through every succeeding period of life ; and thus a rare, an honourable, and a salutary example be set of brotherly love among the members of different churches.

For reasons obvious to every reflecting mind, the synod did not choose to connect such a school as this, with any of our public schools, where young men of every character are assembled. And as the institution is to be supported by donations, for equally obvious reasons, a board of trustees was appointed for its management, and requested to apply to the Legislature for an act of incorporation.

The petition presented by a committee of the board, in conformity to this request, after having encountered some opposition, is now lying on the table of the House of Delegates.

In addition to the benevolent objects, and salutary effects of this institution, which ought to operate in its favour, the present writer would urge the following argument :

It will be universally admitted that our constitution was intended to guarantee to us, as citizens, the exercise and enjoyment of our rights in full and perfect security.

Now we have a right to associate for the purpose of educating poor and pious youth for the ministry of the gospel. This is incontestible ; unless indeed it can be proved to be unlawful to educate youth for this purpose.

We have the right to request a number of gentlemen to act as trustees for the purpose of managing the concerns of a school ; and

these gentlemen have a right to accept of the office conferred on them.

The pious, benevolent, and free citizens of Virginia, have a right to give a portion of their inheritance, or the fruit of their honest industry to those trustees, that it may be employed for the specified purpose. The trustees have a right to claim that property to be appropriated according to the intent of the donor.—Ought not the Legislature, the constitutional guardian of the rights of the citizens, to afford the security that law alone can give to these rights?

The only objection, it seems to me, that can lie against this reasoning is, that from the nature of the social compact, men are under obligation to yield their claim to rights, when the exercise or enjoyment of them would be injurious to society. The truth of this is admitted in all its extent.—The inquiry then will be, do the trustees of the Theological Seminary ask for any thing, that, if granted, would affect the safety or prosperity of the State?

It was supposed, *a priori*, that such a result would never be suspected: at least it was thought that any apprehension of danger from this quarter would indicate a marvellous incitement of the imagination. But as grave and learned men have urged objections to the petition, it has become necessary to examine them with some attention, and ascertain whether they are well founded, or unable to stand enquiry.

It is contended that the prayer of the petition ought not to be granted because,

1. The incorporation of a Theological Seminary "looks like an establishment"; or, will have a tendency to produce an establishment of religion.

2. Because, it would be granting exclusive privileges, contrary to the express words of the Declaration of Rights.

3. Because the holding of property in *mortmain* is injurious to the interests of the State.

4. Because the granting of this petition, would produce similar petitions from other denominations; new schools would be established, and thus a collision be produced between their varying interests, which would be felt even in elections.

5. That the Legislature has nothing, and ought to have nothing whatever to do with religion.

Here, indeed, is a formidable array against our unfortunate petition. We have this consolation, however, that these hostile bands (to continue the personification) aim their weapons so unskilfully, as to strike any thing but the object of attack. They remind one of Diogenes the Cynic, who seeing a young man shooting wide of the mark, placed himself near it, because, said he, "I am afraid *that* youth will hit me if I should not sit here."

But let us, without prejudice, examine these objections. And as to the first, before gentlemen urge it, let them form distinct

ideas of the nature of a religious establishment.* I would define it to be, an acknowledgment by government, of a particular church, as the church of the State, and the maintaining of its worship, and supporting its ministers by taxes laid on the people for that purpose. This, although of itself abundantly injurious and oppressive, is frequently rendered more odious by requiring all the officers of government to belong to the church thus established; and compelling attendance on its services by fines, and forfeitures.

The evils of this system have been pourtrayed in glowing colours. It has been personified, and represented as marking its way with desolation and blood. The justness of the description is admitted—nay it is acknowledged that no powers of language can adequately describe the miseries which have been inflicted by this

Monstrum, horrendum, informe, ingens cui lumen ademptum;

This dreadful deformed, huge, eyeless monster.

But what a genius for caricature must it require to assimilate a poor little charity school, managed by a corporation consisting of the Rev. Dr. Moses Hoge, Matthew Lyle, Conrad Speece, William Wirt, Samuel W. Venable, Josiah Leake, Benjamin Harrison, and a few others to this great Apollyon!

It is admitted, however, because it cannot be denied, that our institution, when incorporated, will not, indeed be an establishment: but apprehensions are entertained that it will lead to this destructive measure. I ask, by what process? Granting a charter to a society, whose fundamental principles are such as have been stated in the preceding pages, is a measure for introducing an establishment, that no common mind would have ever conceived. The connection between the two things implies a perspicacity not inferior to that celebrated by the facetious poet, who recorded the exploits of the famous Sir Hudibras,

And optics good it needs, I ween
To see what is not to be seen.

But it is objected that the prosperity of the Theological Seminary will so multiply Presbyterian preachers, that in process of time they will acquire a preponderating influence in the State; and thus be able to carry their hidden purposes into effect.

Without stopping to inquire how gentlemen have acquired the prerogative of searching the heart, it is answered,

1. That this is a strange argument. Here is a church whose fundamental principles are against all religious establishments: and yet to educate men in the principles of this church is the way to bring about an establishment! This is just as correct as to say, if you wish to make a man a staunch monarchist, instil into his mind good republican principles.

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* A distinction is made between an establishment, and a general assessment. The latter exists, when the people are taxed for the support of religion; but every one is allowed to appropriate the money thus raised, to any denomination, he may think proper.

2. This objection goes to the withholding from us rights which we claim, on account of dangers, which there is not the slightest reason to apprehend. For where is the evidence that we wish an establishment? Let gentlemen produce it if they can.

3. To this it may be added, that the objection, with those who urge it is equivalent to saying, you shall not, if we can prevent it, increase the number of your preachers among us: As far as is in our power we will put you down. This may not be persecution; but is it not a little like it?

4. Finally, the utter weakness of this objection is manifest by this, that our school is thrown open to all denominations of christians.—For the honour of the church of which the author is a member, he could wish that they might not be suspected of such bungling contrivances as this to effect the purpose attributed to them.

But it is said 2dly, that the 4th article of the Declaration of Rights forbids the granting of exclusive privileges; and to grant the prayer of the petition would be a violation of this article.

This objection is urged in such a tone of confidence as to make it necessary that some little attention should be bestowed on it also. The following are the words of the fourth article: "That no "man, or set of men, are entitled to exclusive or separate emolu- "ments or privileges from the community, but in consideration of "public services; which not being descendible, neither ought the "offices of Magistrate, Legislator, or Judge, to be hereditary."

The only question arising here is, what did the framers of the Declaration mean by the term *exclusive?* Johnson's definition is, "Having the power of denying admission—Debarring from partici- pation." In this sense a man has an *exclusive* right to his own houses and lands. We know too well the wise and temperate spi- rit of the fathers of Virginia freedom to imagine that an unlimited construction to the term was meant. They never could have intended to teach that the most sacred private rights were "an odious mono- poly." These wild notions were not entertained by the great men who bequeathed to us the rich inheritance of rational liberty which we now enjoy. It is clear that the word exclusive is to be taken in a restricted sense; and we find a very important restric- tion in the last clause of the article. No doubt this specification was made on account of the notions respecting noble blood which prevail in the country from which we derive our origin, and the hereditary honours and offices enjoyed by their royal family and nobility. How much farther it was meant that the term should extend may admit of much debate. The Presbyterians, as appears from memorials, applied it to religious establishments and the in- corporation of the clergy. Others, as the acts of the Legislature will show, thought that it had no connection with these matters.— It is unnecessary for the author to enter on the discussion here, because it has no connection with the subject before us. This is most manifest from the practice of the General Assembly, acting under the Declaration of Rights and the Constitution. Let it be

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understood that we do not ask for an incorporation of a religious sect, but of trustees of a school, in which are taught the Latin and Greek, mathematics, and philosophy, history and theology. If to grant this, is a violation of the Declaration of Rights, the Legislature has violated it at least one hundred times, by incorporating charitable societies, academies and colleges, banks and turnpike-roads. For no man can shew a shadow of difference in this respect, between the charter for which we ask, and those granted in all these cases.

All this seems sufficiently plain—But let us illustrate it a little farther. Suppose that a number of benevolent lawyers or physicians, united with other gentlemen, considering how many fine geniuses, are permitted to languish under the ungenial influences of poverty, should associate for the purpose of drawing forth from the obscurities of their low estate, and educating for the service of the commonwealth, and the general benefit of society, poor but highly gifted youth; and, animated with the hope of forming a future Pendleton or Wythe, to expound the laws of their country, or a Rush, a Physick, or a Baynham, to relieve the sufferings, and prolong the lives of their fellow men, should call upon their friends, and the public in general; raise funds; appoint trustees, establish a school, and respectfully petition the Legislature for an act of incorporation, that their benevolent objects might be more certainly effected; who would not wish them success; and what Legislature would reject the prayer of the petition? Would it not be thought the absurdest thing in the world to say, these designing lawyers wish to procure for themselves some advantageous legal establishment; these doctors are seeking exclusive privileges; they wish the Legislature to violate the great charter of our liberties? And why is not the same absurdity perceived, when this sort of talk is applied to the petition for chartering the Theological Seminary? Can the Legislature incorporate a medical school, school of law, or of philosophy, without granting exclusive privileges; and yet violate the fundamental principles of our government, by incorporating *a Theological Seminary?* Then the "magic of a name," is not a mere poetical fiction: there is a wonder-working power in the term, of which Theologians never had the least conception.

3. The third objection is founded on certain laws of England, called the statutes of *mortmain*, and of which it is believed that there is not a trace in our statute book. The reader may find a very intelligible account of this matter in Blackstone's Commentaries. It may suffice for my purpose, who am no lawyer, to observe that lands and tenements held by *corporations* whether temporal or ecclesiastical, are held in *mortmain* (in mortua manu.) This phraseology is used I conjecture because, as a dead hand can do nothing, so corporations can never alienate the lands and tenements possessed by them. That the nature of the objection may be fully understood, my readers will please to recollect that many

years ago. Popery was the form of religion established in England; and great ignorance, and of course monstrous superstition prevailed; that the people were taught to believe that the priests (as they were called) could forgive sin, and pray the souls of the departed out of purgatory. That owing to these strange and foolish notions, wicked and cunning ecclesiastics had very great influence over the minds of the people, and contrived to procure from them great sums of money, and very large landed estates. The estates thus held by the church were never alienated. In process of time a very large proportion of the property in England came into the hands of what was called the church, but ought to have been called the synagogue of Satan. The natural consequence of this was, that every lazy, gluttonous, wine-bibbing debauchee sought to get a place in the church; and they who ought to have been examples of purity, justice and charity, snored all day, and spent the night in drinking, gambling, and lewdness. At the same time, they, in the most grievous manner, oppressed, and impoverished the people. Now those who are opposed to the incorporation of the Theological Seminary on account of the third objection, are afraid that some such evils as these will result from it. But we who urge this measure considering that the *Bible is now in the hands of all classes of people; that by means of the art of printing, information is very generally diffused, and the sum of human knowledge every year increased, are not at all apprehensive that any of the evils, which have been described, will be experienced—Because we do not believe that our countrymen could be imposed on and deluded as the poor papists were, by their priests. However, we are by no means desirous that the church, or our Theological Seminary should be too rich; because we are afraid that in such a case, ambitious and wicked men, would be tempted to seek a place among *us*. We are, therefore, entirely willing, nay desirous, that the Legislature, in granting us a charter should lay such restrictions on us, as in their wisdom, may seem proper. And this may suffice for an answer to the third objection.

But it is said, should the prayer of the petition now lying on the table of the House of Delegates, be granted, we shall, at the next session of the Legislature, see petitions coming, from other denominations for the same favour:—Perhaps it would be so.—It would cost the Legislature very little trouble to make the favour common to all. The right is no doubt common to every Christian society; and we should gladly give them our influence, if we have any, in securing it. Here, in passing, I must be permitted to ask, if we only claim, a common right, what becomes of all that has been said about exclusive privileges? But not to insist on this, suppose that what has been anticipated as an objection should take place in its fullest extent, what evil would result from it?—

*The Bible teaches that they who do not provide for their own household, have denied the faith, and are worse than infidels.

Would it injure the State, if every preacher in it were a man of enlarged and liberal mind? I had thought the reverse. I had really supposed that the best interests of society would be promoted, by the regular attention of the citizens to lectures delivered by men so instructed as to be able to communicate important information to all classes of citizens. The effect so much dreaded, then, was regarded, should it take place, as a salutary result of the measure urged by us. Yet some think differently, and venture to predict that the granting of our petition and the consequences, which would result from it, would even be felt in elections, and votes be given, not in reference to political sentiments, but to Theological Seminaries.

Should this prove to be the case, it would really be the strangest effect, that ever resulted from any cause, since the great chain of causes was put in operation. Let us not be led by *words*, but look to things.

In Virginia there are but few denominations of Christians, who will be disposed to take advantage of any favour the Legislature might grant to Theological Seminaries. The members of these several denominations would contribute, we will suppose as they could afford to the establishment of say, four Divinity Halls in Virginia. At one of these, perhaps, there might be five students, at another ten, &c. But let it be said that on an average there would be twenty in each. Here then, would be in a population of a million of souls, eighty students, in all the stillness and privacy of a college life pursuing their studies. I should as soon expect an influence on elections from as many boys ploughing the fields of their fathers, as from these institutions. One would think, from objections of this kind, that, because our petition has excited much attention, gentlemen think it a very formidable affair indeed; and not knowing exactly what to apprehend, fix upon the worst political evils that can befal us, as the probable consequences of its success.

But should it be argued that those, who may be educated at these seminaries, will, after going forth into the world, acquire an influence which will be felt even at elections: it is answered that the place where a clergyman is educated, can have no effect upon his influence on society. This objection then if it prove any thing, will prove that the number of clergymen ought not to be increased; that the fewer the better, especially if they are men of learning. If gentlemen mean this, they ought in candour to avow it, that their sentiments may be understood.

5. In the preceding part of this pamphlet, the Author has had it in view, as stated in the preliminary remarks, to prevent the injurious effects which might be produced on the Presbyterian society by the insinuations so often made that they are aiming at an establishment, and are unfriendly to republican institutions. Had he intended it as a memorial to the Legislature, the style and manner would have been very different. In noticing the last ob-

jection that has been stated, he begs leave, with all the deference which becomes a citizen when addressing the Legislature of his country to submit a few remarks to the present General Assembly. And from the very attentive hearing which was given him, when he had the honour to appear at their bar, he hopes that his motives for the present address, which he intends should be in the highest degree respectful, will be duly appreciated, and his observations regarded according to their importance, whatever they may be.

It is objected to the prayer of our petition that the Legislature ought not, in any way whatever, to interfere in the concerns of religion. If by this it is meant that the Legislature, ought not to prescribe articles of faith, or modes of worship; or *compel* the people to support any form of worship, or frequent any church; or if it is meant that the people ought to be left perfectly at liberty to render to the Deity that service which they are convinced is reasonable, then the objection is admitted in its fullest force, by the petitioners, and by every Presbyterian in Virginia. But if it is intended that because the Legislature ought not to interfere with religion, they ought not to incorporate a seminary intended for conducting studies preparatory for the ministry of the gospel, it is contended that the conclusion does not follow from the premises; because the religion of every man will be as perfectly free after such incorporation as before.

And here it may be remarked that the question properly at issue is not, whether the Legislature will encourage this or that sect of Christians, but whether it will, or ought to encourage religion at all?

On this question it is respectfully represented that man by the original constitution of his nature, is a religious being, and altho' "very far gone from original righteousness," still retains so much of his primitive constitution, and at the same time has such a sense of his weaknesses and wants, that in every nation, ancient or modern, we find religious rites and observances. The attempt to eradicate all religious feeling, would be as ineffectual as the attempt to suppress the love of honour, or of gain, or affection for kindred.

In our country Christianity is the religion of the nation.—The government acknowledges its truth, and calls in its aid, by directing that solemn oaths should be administered "on the holy Evangelists of Almighty God." And whatever men may think of its origin, it cannot be desirable that Christianity should be eradicated, as well because it must be exceedingly doubtful, to say the least, whether a better system could be substituted in its place; as because the destruction of this system, would be attended with a disruption of all the ties which bind us together in society. Besides this, Christianity is peculiarly calculated to promote the service of the Republic, because, unlike all other religions, it does not substitute the performance of religious service, in place

of the discharge of social duties. In fact, when any collision takes place between, what for distinction's sake, are termed religious observances, and the duties of social life, the former, according to the express decision of the Author of Christianity, must give place to the latter.

It is farther respectfully represented, that religion in general, and Christianity in particular, is from its nature calculated to produce the deepest, and most powerful feelings that human beings can experience. The incomprehensible majesty and glory of God, the fruits of his love, eternity, happiness increasing through unmeasured ages, and miseries unmitigated forever, are the awfully sublime and tremendous subjects, which the Christian is every day called to contemplate. Christianity has an universal influence; its precepts extend to every relation in life, and to the discharge of every duty incumbent on man; and it connects us and all our relations with eternity. Of course it has a powerful influence upon the habits, customs, sentiments and institutions of every people where it prevails. The whole tenour of history is proof of this fact. And indeed universally, if laws are made to suit the condition of a people, they will necessarily, in part at least, take their colouring from the prevalent religion. It is in vain for a Legislature, especially of a free people, representing their sentiments, and acting according to their views, to disclaim all religious influence, and absolutely refuse to have any thing to do with this uncontrolable subject.

This being the case, it is an inquiry of primary importance, what is it for the interest of the people that the Legislature should do?

Some Legislators, perceiving the necessity of religion to give energy to the laws, and promote the ends of government, have courted its alliance with the State, and established by public authority some particular form of worship. The evils of this measure, have been forcibly represented in the memorials published in this pamphlet. And it seems strange that any thinking mind can fail to perceive the injustice of the system, and its immoral tendencies. Men always have differed as to modes and forms of worship; and it is glaringly oppressive to compel them to support that mode, from which conscience obliges them to dissent. Moreover, the patronage, and emoluments afforded by government to the favoured sect, present temptations to the proud, avaricious, and ambitious, which they have never been known to resist. They will seek admission to the ministry of the gospel, and an office, which was instituted for the purpose of promoting purity, peace, self denial, and humility, will be transformed into an instrument of corruption and oppression. By a delusion, of which it is wonderful that rational beings can be the subjects, corrupt men will persuade themselves that religion sanctifies their bad passions; and thus offences against the plainest precepts of Christianity, will be committed under the cloak of religion, and a sacred concern for the interests of the *venerable* establishment. The real followers of

the meek and lowly Saviour, have understood so well the pernicious effects of supporting religion by fines and forfeitures, prisons and gibbets, that they deprecate nothing so much as any acknowledgment of the civil magistrate, as head of the church.

The evils of a general assessment in our country could not be less extensive than those of an establishment.

But it is vain to think of getting rid of all these difficulties by an attempt to put down religion. Exist it will, in spite of all opposition; and if not permitted to take its natural shape, and pursue its salutary course, like electricity when its equilibrium is destroyed, it may carry desolation and destruction wherever it moves. Nothing is so meek, so gentle, so peaceable, as pure and undefiled religion: nothing so lawless, so turbulent, so refractory as fanaticism. The one is like the mild and genial light of Heaven, arising with cheerfulness in its beams; the other like the baleful comet,

> Which fires the length of Ophiucus huge,
> And from its horrid hair, shakes pestilence and war.'

Now the natural progress of Christianity is in the way of intellectual and moral improvement. And all that the Presbyterian society wishes the Legislature of their country to do, in addition to what has been done, is to aid in promoting this improvement. Let every society, without discrimination have their churches, and their schools, and we ask no more.

In a country where religious freedom prevails, it is on every account important that the teachers of religion should be well educated. In most establishments so much is prescribed, that the minister of religion has little to do but conform to the prescriptions of the head of the church. But in a country where the people are happily free from every yoke of bondage,

> "Who will may preach, and what they will."

Every one that chooses thus to employ himself, may set up for a teacher, in connection with any society of Christians, or separate from them all.

It is worthy of very serious inquiry, what may in process of time, be the effects of hundreds and hundreds of teachers, communicating without control or restraint, every week, their views and feelings to the people, and that on a subject which rouses all the energies of the human heart, and raises to their highest tone all its most powerful feelings. Can such a case as this, operating with its full force, fail to have a mighty effect both upon the moral and intellectual faculties of the people? And can a philosophical politician contemplate it with indifference? The question then recurs what is the Legislature to do? The intolerable oppression of establishments is out of the question.—The suppression of religion is as impossible as it would be ruinous. What remains then but for our rulers to give us authority to do, that which we have a natural right to do, namely erect schools, and educate our youth for the highly important office of the ministry of the gospel?

It is certainly most desirable that religion should be directed, according to the very appropriate language of the Declaration of Rights, "by reason and conviction." And what we most earnestly wish is that all religious teachers may go through that course of intellectual discipline, which superadded to genuine piety, will render them suitable *instruments* for convincing the heart and enlightening the understanding of their hearers.

But however this may be, every thinking man will deeply study the effects of the causes now in operation, will calculate their probable effects, and endeavour by all prudent means to make them productive of salutary consequences.

The author will be greatly misunderstood, and truly grieved, should it be supposed that he intends to cast any reflections on those who differ from him as to the proper qualifications of a gospel minister. He believes that all denominations of Christians in the State have been favoured with truly useful preachers; and he takes pleasure in expressing his affectionate regard for all who in sincerity and love, endeavour to preach "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." At the same time he has no doubt but that all of every name would be most ready to make the acknowledgment, which he himself is at all times ready to make, that it would be better for the church and society, if we were all much better furnished than we are, for the sacred office. It is believed that a conviction of the *expediency* at least, of affording a good education to ministers of the gospel is gaining ground in the country. This is hailed as an omen of good; and the expectation is entertained, that some, who are now opposed to our petition, will before long ask for the same favour.

Whatever may be thought of the reasoning employed above, to show the innocent nature of the measure proposed by us, the author with confidence appeals to the testimony of experience, assured that in that there can be no fallacy. But that he may not unnecessarily prolong this pamphlet, already perhaps too much extended, he will only have recourse to the practice of the great and flourishing State of Pennsylvania for a confirmation of his argument.

The constitution of that State more fully and explicitly than our own, establishes religious freedom. And yet no petition for any purpose similar to that presented to the House of Delegates of Virginia has ever been rejected.

The following statement has just been received from an eminent lawyer in Philadelphia:

"*As early as the 6th of February*, 1730—31, *an act of Assembly was passed, by* "*which it was enacted*—"*That it shall and may be lawful to and for any religious* "*society of Protestants within this province, to purchase, take, and receive, by gift,* "*grant, or otherwise, for burying grounds, erecting churches, houses of religious wor-*"*ship, schools, and almshouses, for any estate whatever, and to hold the same for the* "*uses aforesaid, of the lord of the fee by the accustomed rents.*

"*From the year* 1799 *to the present time the Legislature has granted charters to* 'all descriptions of Religious Societies, who have chosen to ask for them, without 'discrimination. And I believe it may be confidently asserted that no application for

" Female *Bible Society*; which was a case of a peculiar character. *Upon turning to*
" *the statute book, I find upwards of sixty charters of this description, and among them*
" *several which I shall particularly mention hereafter. Besides granting charters on*
" *application to it, the Legislature in the year* 1791, *passed an act, by which it was*
" *provided*—" *That when any number of persons, citizens of this commonwealth, are*
" *associated, or mean to associate for any* literary, *charitable*, or for any religious
" purpose, *and shall be desirous to acquire and enjoy the powers and immunities of a*
" *corporation or body politic in law, it shall and may be lawful for such persons to*
" *prepare an instrument in writing therein specifying the objects, articles, conditions*
" *and name, style or title under which they have associated, or mean to associate, and*
" *the same to exhibit to the Attorney General of the Commonwealth*—*The Attorney*
" *General is to examine it, and transmit it with his opinion touching the lawfulness of*
" *the objects to the Supreme Court, who are to examine it, and transmit it with the*
" *like opinion to the Governor; and if the Attorney General and the Supreme Court*
" *certify that the objects, articles, and conditions are lawful, the instrument is sent by*
" *the Governor to the Master of Rolls, and on the enrolment the persons so associated*
" *become a corporation. The corporations thus constituted may hold real and personal*
" *estate, so that the clear yearly value or income of such estates, do not exceed the*
" *sum of five hundred pounds. Under this act of Assembly very many religious so-*
" *cieties have been incorporated; and no discrimination is known as to the tenets or*
" *opinions of those who apply for charter privileges.*

Among the charters granted by the Legislature *are the following:*

" *On* 27*th February*, 1788. *The Society for propagating the gospel among the Hea-*
" thens, formed by the members of the Episcopal church of
" the United Brethren, or Unitas Fratrum.

" *On* 28*th March*, 1797. *The citizens of this State, members of the Aggregate*
" Corporation for the relief of the widows and children of the
" Protestant Episcopal Church in the U. States of America.

" *On* 28*th March*, 1799. *The Trustees of the General Assembly of the Presbyte-*
" rian Church in the United States of America.

" *On* 30*th January*, 1810. *The Bible Society of Philadelphia.*

" *On* 20*th March*, 1810. *The Pittsburg Synod, by the style of* " *the Western Mis-*
sionary Society."

" *There may exist some others, which have not fallen within my notice; but the*
" *mention of these will serve to display the course of conduct, which has been pursued*
" *by the Legislature of Pennsylvania on this interesting point.*"

Now we do not find, in the experience of our sister State, any of those evils which the excited imagination of many has pictured as the result of our charity school when incorporated. Where are her established priesthood, and allowance of exclusive privileges? Under what ecclesiastical tyranny do the people groan? What evidence have we that the State is impoverished to enrich the Church? Let her free and happy citizens, her extended, and still extending commerce, and her daily improvements in agriculture, arts, and sciences, furnish an answer.

P. S. The publication of this pamphlet has been very unexpectedly delayed, until a question on the petition of the Trustees has been taken.—The decision of the House was unfavourable.—The Author can here only return his thanks to the House for the opportunity afforded to the Committee of supporting the petition by an argument at their bar. He promises, however, that a history of this case shall, in a short time, if nothing now unforeseen should prevent, be laid before the people, and he engages that " nothing shall be extenuated, nor aught set down in malice."

FINIS.

Erratum. Preliminary remarks, page 5, line 6 from the bottom, for *slightly* read *lightly*.